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THE PURGATORY
OF
SUICIDES.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

In Two Vols., Post 8vo.,

WISE SAWS AND MODERN INSTANCES.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

A PRISON-RHYME.

IN TEN BOOKS.

BY THOMAS COOPER,
THE CHARTIST.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR JEREMIAH HOW,
209, PICCADILLY.

MDCCCXLV.

PRINTED BY M'GOWAN AND CO.,
GREAT WINDMILL STREET, HAYMARKET.

P. K.
V. 3. 25
L. 2. 4
1845

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following 'Prison-Rhyme,'—part of an historical romance,—a series of simple tales,—and a small Hebrew guide,—were the fruits of two years and eleven weeks' confinement in Stafford Gaol. The first idea of creating a poem, in which the spirits of suicides should be the actors or conversers, arose in my mind ten years ago;—but a line might never have been composed except for my imprisonment,—and the political strife in which I have been engaged has certainly given a form and colour to my thoughts which they could not have worn had my conceptions been realised at an earlier period. An individual who bent over *the last* and wielded *the awl* till three and twenty,—struggling, amidst weak health and deprivation, to acquire a knowledge of languages,—and whose experience in after-life was, at first, limited to the humble sphere of a schoolmaster, and never enlarged beyond that of a laborious worker on a newspaper, could scarcely have constructed a fabric of verse embodying more than a few poetical generalities. My persecutors have, at least, the merit of assisting to give a more robust character to my verse,—though I most assuredly owe them no love for the days and nights of agony I endured from neuralgia, rheumatism, and I know not what other torments,—occasioned by a damp sleeping cell, added to the generally injurious influences of imprisonment.

I have not the slightest wish to enlarge on the circumstances of suffering under which my verses have been strung together : and only deprecate that severity of criticism which a *Chartist* rhymist must expect to encounter—by observing that I am pain-

fully conscious my book contains many passages correspondingly feeble with the debilitated state in which I often strove to urge on the completion of my design. For reasons that involve the fate of others, as well as my own, I cannot omit to add a few remarks in this preface relative to the causes of our imprisonment.

The first six stanzas of the following poem may be considered as embodying a speech I delivered to the Colliers on strike, in the Staffordshire Potteries, on the 15th of August, 1842. Without either purposing, aiding and abetting, or even knowing of an outbreak till it had occurred,—I regret to add that my address was followed by the demolition and burning of several houses, and by other acts of violence. I, and others, were apprehended and tried. My first trial was for the most falsely alleged crime of burning and demolishing, or assisting to burn and demolish. Sir Wm. Follett,—then Solicitor-General,—used every endeavour to procure a conviction. I pleaded my own cause,—a number of respectable working-men proved my *alibi*,—and Judge Tindal intimated his conviction that the evidence did *not* prove I was guilty. The jury returned a verdict in my favour,—and I was thus saved from transportation,—perhaps for the term of my natural life,—but was remanded for trial on two other indictments.

In a few minutes, I met melancholy proof of the extreme peril in which I had just been placed, for, on being taken back to the dungeon beneath the Court-House,—a filthy, stifling cell to which prisoners are brought from the gaol on day of trial, and which, in the language of the degraded beings who usually occupy it, is called ‘the glory-hole,’—I found William Ellis walking about the room, and on taking his hand and speaking to him for the first time in my life, I learned that *he* had just been sentenced to twenty-one years’ transportation for a like alleged offence to that for which I had been tried and acquitted.

Yet he assured me, in the most solemn manner, that he was utterly innocent, and was asleep in his bed at Burslem, at the time it had been sworn he was on the scene of the fire at Hanley. The aged woman with whom he and his wife lodged made oath to the truth of this ; but in spite of corroborative proofs of his innocence,—he was convicted on the strange testimony of *one man* who said that he first saw a tall figure with its back towards him, at the fires,—that he then, for a few moments, saw the *side face, blacked*, of this figure,—and that he could swear it was Ellis ! On the false evidence of this man, alone, has poor Ellis been banished from his country,—leaving his wife and children to the bitterest contumely and insult from his enemies. Yet,—he *had* committed a crime,—and it was so indelibly chronicled in the memories of the Staffordshire magnates that the governor of Stafford Gaol reminded him of it, as soon as he was brought to prison :—he had been guilty of an act of discourtesy to the Lord Lieutenant of the County ! At a County Meeting called to congratulate the Queen on the birth of the Prince of Wales,—Ellis, at the head of the Chartist of the Potteries and the democratic shoemakers of Stafford, opposed the grandee when named as president of the meeting, succeeded in getting a working-man into the chair, by an overwhelming show of hands,—and the intended ‘congratulation’ ended in naught. Such was poor Ellis’s *real* crime. Did it deserve twenty-one years’ transportation ? Let his bitterest enemies answer,—for even *they* are *now* professing their belief that Ellis was *not* at the fires.

I am, then, not the heaviest sufferer by false acensation,—yet I feel I have great cause to complain of the crookedness of their procedures on the part of our prosecutors ; and, though it may subject me to a sneer for squeamish taste, I cannot help observing that I could have submitted to imprisonment without giving the lawyers much trouble, if the proceedings against myself and

others had been *less* crooked. When the third indictment against me was read,—for ‘sedition’ simply,—I told the Judge that I would at once plead ‘guilty,’ and give the Court no further trouble, if he would, as a lawyer, assure me that it *was* sedition to advise men to ‘cease labour until the People’s Charter became the law of the land,’—for that I *had* so advised the Colliers in the Potteries, and would not deny it: but Sir Nicholas Tindal said he could *not* assure me that it was sedition!

After being at liberty some time, on bail, I was tried before Judge Erskine, for a ‘seditious conspiracy’ with William Ellis, John Richards, and Joseph Capper. Again, I felt discontent at the *crookedness* of the law or custom that rendered it possible for me to stand indicted for a conspiracy with the poor exile, whom I had never seen nor communicated with in my life till we became prisoners. My discontent rose to stern resolve, however, as soon as I found, by the opening speech of counsel, that it was intended,—by what I considered most villainous unfairness,—to revive all the old charges of ‘aiding to burn and demolish’ in this second trial,—although under an indictment for conspiracy, only. My Judge acted worthily for one who bears the honoured name of Erskine, and allowed me all the fair-play an Englishman could desire who had to plead his own cause, without lawyer or counsel, against four regular gownsmen with horse-hair wigs. The struggle lasted ten days, and the County papers made testy complaints of “the insolent daring of a Chartist, who had thrown the whole county business of Staffordshire, and Shropshire, and Herefordshire into disorder,”—but they were, of course, quite blind to the mean-spirited injustice which had girt me up to fight against it. We were found ‘guilty,’ as a matter of course, but the result was *to me* a victory; for I so completely succeeded in laying bare the falsehood of the witnesses who affirmed I had been seen in the immediate neighbourhood of the fires, that the jury told the judge they did

not wish to have that part of his lordship's notes read to them which contained the evidence of the said witnesses, but preferred that his lordship should write "mistake" thereon instead. My aged friend John Richards, and myself, were called up for judgment in the Court of Queen's Bench some weeks after, and Lord Denman, Sir John Patteson, and Sir John Williams there read out the word "mistake," as inserted in Judge Erskine's notes; and thus openly proclaimed the fact that my enemies had failed in their attempt to fix the brand of felony upon me.

I make no doubt but that many will be disposed still to think and say, that however far I might be from intending to excite to violence, since violence followed my address, it is but just that I have suffered for it. I beg to say, however, that I hold a very contrary opinion. If an Englishman excites his wronged fellow-countrymen to a legal and constitutional course, (and Lord Chief Justice Tindal told the Stafford jury that now the old Combination Act was abolished, it *was* perfectly legal and constitutional for men to agree to cease labour, until the People's Charter became law,) it surely is not the person who so excites them that ought to be held responsible for the violence they may commit under an enraged sense of wrong, but *the Government who wrongs them*. I appeal to Englishmen of all shades of politics whether this is not the judgment we pass on all the *fortunate* revolutions that have occurred in our history.

Yet Sir William Follett, who *again* used his decaying strength, the hour before judgment was passed upon us in the Bench, pointed to me with an austere look, and said, "This man is the chief author of the violence that occurred, and I conjure your lordships to pass a severe sentence on the prisoner Cooper."

Scarcely three years have passed, and the great lawyer is no more. He wronged me, but I think of him with no vindictive

feeling, for my imprisonment has opened to me a nobler source of satisfaction than *he* could ever derive from all his honours. He amassed wealth, but the *Times*, alluding to the “frequent unhappy disappointments” occasioned by Sir William Follett’s non-attendance on cases he undertook to plead, says—“So often did they occur, that solicitors and clients, in the agony of disaster and defeat, were in the habit of saying that Sir Wilham often took briefs when he must have known that he could not attend in court: and as barristers never return fees, the suitor sometimes found that he lost his money and missed his advocate at a moment when he could badly spare either.” I am poor, and have been plunged into more than two hundred pounds’ debt by the persecution of my enemies; but I have the consolation to know that my course was dictated by heartfelt zeal to relieve the sufferings and oppressions of my fellow-men. He was entombed with pomp, and a host of titled great ones, of every shade of party, attended the laying of his clay in the grave; and they purpose now to erect a monument to his memory. Let them build it: the self-educated shoemaker has also reared his;—and, despite its imperfections, he has a calm confidence that, though the product of poverty, and suffering, and wrong, it will outlast the posthumous stone-block that may be erected to perpetuate the memory of the titled lawyer.

134, Blackfriars Road, London.

August 1, 1845.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

TO THOMAS CARLYLE.

Right noble age-fellow, whose speech and thought
Proclaim thee other than the supple throng,
Who glide Life's custom-smoothed path along,—
Prescription's easy slaves,—strangers to doubt,
Because they never think!—a lay untaught
I offer thee. Receive the humble song,—
A tribute of the feeble to the strong
Of inward ken,—for that the theme is fraught
With dreams of Reason's high enfranchisement.
To thee,—illustrious Schiller's friend,—to thee
Mind's freedom must be precious,—or what meant
His deathless toil, and what means thine? The free
Of soul with quenchless zeal must ever glow
To spread the freedom which their own minds know.

STAFFORD GAOL,

May 3rd, 1845.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE FIRST.

I.

SLAVES, toil no more !—Why delve, and moil, and pine,
To glut the tyrant-forgers of your chain ?

Slaves, toil no more ! Up, from the midnight mine,
Summon your swarthy thousands to the plain ;—

Beneath the bright sun marshalled, swell the strain

Of Liberty ;—and, while the lordlings view

Your banded hosts, with stricken heart and brain,—

Shout, as one man,—‘ Toil we no more renew,

‘ Until the Many cease their slavery to the Few !’

II.

‘ We’ll crouch, and toil, and weave, no more—to weep !’

Exclaim your brothers from the weary loom :—

Yea, now, they swear, with one resolve dread, deep—

‘ We’ll toil no more—to win a pauper’s doom !—

And, while the millions swear, fell Famine’s gloom

Spreads from their haggard faces, like a cloud

Big with the fear and darkness of the tomb :—

How, ’neath its terrors, are the tyrants bowed !—

Slaves, toil no more—to starve !—Go forth, and tame the Proud !

III.

And why not tame them all ?—Of more than clay
Do your high lords proclaim themselves ?—Of blood
Illustrious boast they ?—or, that reason's ray
Beams from the brows of Rollo's robber-brood
More brightly than from yours ? Let them make good
Their vaunt of nobleness—or now confess
The majesty of ALL ! Raise *ye* the feud—
Not, like their sires, to murder and possess ;—
But for unbounded power to gladden and to bless.

IV.

What say ye,—that the priests proclaim content ?
So taught their Master,—who the hungry fed
As well as taught,—who wept with men,—and bent,
In gentleness and love, o'er bier and bed
Where wretchedness was found, until it fled ?
Rebuked he not the false ones, till his zeal
Drew down their hellish rage upon his head ?—
And who, that yearns for world-spread human weal,
Doth not, ere long, the weight of priestly vengeance feel ?

V.

Away !—the howl of wolves in sheep's disguise
Why suffer ye to fill your ears ?—their pride
Why suffer ye to stalk before your eyes ?
Behold, in pomp, the purple prelate ride,—
And, on the beggar by his chariot's side
Frown sullenly,—although in rags and shame
His brother cries for food ! Up, swell the tide
Of retribution, till ye end the game
Long practised by sleek priests in old Religion's name.

VI.

Slaves, toil no more !—Despite their boast, ev'n kings
Must cease to sit in pride,—without your toil :
Spite of their sanctity,—the surpliced things
Who, through all time, have thirsted to embroil
Man with his neighbour, and pollute the soil
Of holiest mother Earth with brother's gore,—
Join but to fold your hands, and ye will foil
To utter helplessness,—yea, to the core
Strike their pale craft with paler death !—Slaves, toil no more !

VII.

For that these words of truth I boldly spake
To Labour's children in their agony
Of want and insult,—and, like men awake
After drugg'd slumbers, they did wildly flee
To do they knew not what,—until, with glee,
The cellar of a christian priest they found,
And with its poison fired their misery
To mad revenge,—swift hurling to the ground
And flames—bed, cassock, wine-cups of the tipler gowned :

VIII.

For that I boldly spake these words of truth,
And the starved multitude,—to fury wrought
By sense of injury, and void of ruth,—
Rushed forth to deeds of recklessness,—but nought
Achieved of freedom,—since, nor plan, nor thought
Their might directed : for this treason foul
'Gainst evil tyrants, I was hither brought
A captive,—'mid the vain derisive howl
Of some who thought the iron now should pierce my soul.

IX.

Let them howl on !—their note, perchance, may change :
The earthquake oft is presaged by dull rest :
Kings may, to-morrow, feel its heavings strange !—
For my lorn dove, who droopeth in her nest,
I mourn, in tenderness,—but, to this breast
Again to clasp my meek one I confide
With fervid trustfulness !—and, for the rest,—
Since Truth shall one day triumph,—let betide
What may,—within these bars in patience I can 'bide.

X.

I had a vision, on my prison-bed,
Which took its tinct from the mind's waking throes :
Of patriot blood on field and scaffold shed ;
Of martyrs' ashes ; of the demon foes
Ubiquitous, relentless, that oppose
And track, through life, the footsteps of the brave
Who champion Truth ; of Evil that arose
Within the universe of Good, and gave
To sovereign Man the soul to live his brother's slave ;

XI.

Of knowledge which, from sire to son bequeathed,
Hath ever on the Few with bounty smiled,—
But, on the Many, wastingly hath breathed
A pestilence,—from the scourged crowd that piled,
Of yore, the pyramids, to the dwarfed child
Whose fragile bloom steam and starvation blast ;
Of specious arts, whereby the bees beguiled,
Yield to the sable drones their sweet repast,
And creep, themselves, the path to heaven by pious fast ;

XII.

Of infamy for him who gives himself
A sacrifice to stem the tyrants' rage ;
And, for the tyrants' pandar,—peerage, pelf,
And honours blazed with lies on hist'ry's page ;
Of giant Wrong who, fed, from age to age,
With man's best blood and woman's purest tears,
Seems with our poor humanity to wage
Exterminating war ; of hopes and fears
That mock the human worm from youth to grayest years ;

XIII.

I, waking, thought or dreamt,—for thoughts are dreams
At best,—until, in weariness of heart,
I cried—Is life worth having ? Earth but teems
With floods of evil : 'tis one sordid mart
Where consciences for gold, without a smart,
Are sold ; and holiest names are gravest cheats :
Men, from their cradles, learn to play a part
At plundering each other : He who beats,
On his weak neighbour, swift, the plund'ring trick repeats.

XIV.

Is life worth having ?—Or, is he most wise
Who, self-administered, the med'cine takes
That puts an end to mortal miseries ?—
Can he be guilty who, at once, forsakes
The agony which, sure as death, o'ertakes,
Early or late, all who with wrong contend ?—
Since Power this earth a clime of misery makes
For him who will not to its godhead bend—
Why to th' enfranchised grave with sluggish foot-steps wend ?

XV.

Thus feebly pondering, with troubled brain,
The right of suffering man to consummate,
Unsummoned, his high trust,—my heart grew fain
To slay the incubus that on it sate
Breeding, of life disgust and jaundiced hate.—
Forthwith, I strove the mind's turmoil to quell
By imaging that joy all-elevate
Which through earth's universal heart shall swell
When over land and sea hath rung Oppression's knell :

XVI.

But sadness checked the theme. Enfever'd Sleep,
With tardy foot, came last ; and, while she bound
My limbs in outward death, within the deep
Recesses of the brain into life wound
These aching thoughts,—yea, into shapes that frowned
Or smiled, by turns, with seeming passion rife,—
And descant joined on human themes,—though sound
Of human voice none uttered : 'twas the strife
Of Mind,—not audible by mode of mortal life.—

XVII.

Methought I voyaged in the bark of Death,—
Himself the helmsman,—on a skyless sea,
Where none of all his passengers drew breath,—
Yet each, instinct with strange vitality,
Glared from his ghastly eye-balls upon me,
And then upon that pilot, who upheld
One chill and fleshless hand so witheringly
That, while around his boat the hoarse waves swelled,
It seemed as if their rage that solemn signal quelled.

XVIII.

I know not how these mariners I saw :
No light made visible the grisly crew :
It seemed a vision of the soul,—by law
Of corp'ral sense unfettered, and more true
Than living things revealed to mortal view.
Nor can earth's Babel syllables unfold
Aught that can shadow forth the mystic hue
Of myriad creatures,—or their monstrous mould,—
Which thwart that dismal sea their hideous hugeness rolled.

XIX.

Not stature terrible of mastodon
Or mammoth ;—longitude of lizards vast,
Lords of the slime when earth, from chaos won,
Grew big with primal life, until, aghast,
She quaked at her strange children ;—not all past
Or present, which from out the dædal earth,
The human reptile, latest born, hath classed
By guess, cleping it ' Knowledge'—for the mirth
Of future worms, crawling, in pride, to death—from birth ;

XX.

Not old leviathan, of bulk uncouth ;—
Nor fabled kraken, with his sea-borne trail ;—
Not all that sages tell, in sober sooth,
Of the sun's progeny on Memphic vale,
Which from redundant Nile his beams exhale ;—
Nor all that phrenzied poets exorcise
From memory's grave, then weave with fancies frail ;—
Can image, in their shades, or shapes, or size,
Those ocean-dwellers huge beholding Death's emprise.

XXI.

The voyage, voyagers, and ocean-forms,
Alike, were strange, and wild, and wonderful ;
But marvels grew ! When, of that sea of storms
We reached the shore, the waves at once were lull—
Death and his skiff vanished, and seemed null
And void as things that never were—while they,
Of late Death's passengers, so cold and dull,
Took, with an air of stern resolve, their way
Into a gloomy land where startling visions lay.

XXII.

All that Death's ocean shewed of hideousness
By living forms in lifeless shapes found here
Its paragon : it was a wilderness
Of all things dorn and doleful, dark and drear :
No sun to fructify—no flowers to cheer
Its sullen barrenness : weeds, huge and dank,
And blossomless as stones, and ever sere,
Base sustenance from stagnant waters drank,—
Then spread throughout the plain their pois'nous perfume rank.

XXIII.

Damp, dense, and deathly,—yet the climate parched
Those silent travellers with raging thirst ;
But, sick'ning at the slimy pools, they marched
Onward, enfevered, fainting ;—'till outburst
Their burning tongues, as doth a hound's when curst
With madness. Path across that dismal land
Was none ; and though no life its waters nursed,
Yet were there fearful sights, on either hand,
That much affrayed the courage of that ghastly band.

XXIV.

Chasms yawned, like dragons' jaws, from what seemed rock,—
Then closed, with sulphurous smell, and horrid jar,—
And uprose giant cliffs, to gibe and mock,
As if with demon features,—while, afar,
Appeared colossal meteors for wild war
Gathering their troops terrific,—which came on
With fury,—but, like some portentous star
That fear-struck men gaze after—and—'tis gone!
Vanished those vaporous hosts in that unearthly zone.

XXV.

Then felt the fainting footmen as if yoked
To viewless vehicles they could not move;
Yet, fastened by a galling chain, half-choked
They still to drag their unseen burthen strove—
Till the wild crags came toppling from above—
Threat'ning to crush the strugglers into nought—
When lo!—some airy necromancy wove
Around their trembling limbs, with speed of thought,
A web of gossamer,—with wizard safety fraught:

XXVI.

And now, as if above the rocks upborne—
Suspended in mid-air—with vision dazed,
And swimming brain—past rescue, doomed, forlorn—
For some unspeakable perdition raised,
They seemed;—but suddenly, let down, amazed
Their forms engulfed amid the swamp beheld,—
Where,—while they clung unto the weeds, and gazed
Upward, in hope to climb,—some weird hand felled
Their grasp, and o'er their heads the poisoned waters welled.

XXVII.

Yet, on dry land as speedily they stood,—
Where they again their venturous march prepared,—
While apparitions from the stagnant flood
And murky air, unto the wand'ers bared
Increasing horrors, as they onward fared.—
Ye may a jest this dreaming rhyme esteem—
But these strange terrors my wrapt spirit shared ;
And, though it was the journey of a dream,—
Had ye thus dreamt, no jest ye would that journey deem.

XXVIII.

A cavern's mouth, browed by a giant mound
Gave welcome respite to their torturous toil :
For, entering there, the way-worn wand'ers found
The semblance of a subterranean aisle,—
And walked admiringly,—yet feared, the while,
Sudden renewal of their suffering plight,
Or deeper woe whelmed 'neath the rocky pile :
But,—'midst their fears,—sense of unearthly light
Dawned, with a thrill of ease, upon their anxious sight.

XXIX.

Above them curved the likeness of a roof
Of woven rock,—strange supernatural glare
Diffusing from its tracery,—that seemed woof
Of masonry more mystical and rare
Than devotees of proud cathedraled prayer
Witness while worshipping the Nazarene—
Pride lauding lowliness !—and past compare
Of monkish mixtures were the shapes, I ween,
Of shaft and capital, that 'long that vault were seen.

XXX.

Not, as with fashion of that gloomy age
When Phantasy, in convent bondage bred,
Drew graces from distraction,—mingling rage
Grotesque of apes with ire of angels dread,—
Aiming all contraries to blend and wed,
Until with hybrids she had filled the mind,
And with wild wonderment its powers misled,
So that, its grasp grown loose and undefined,
The shaven and shorn enchanters might its freedom bind :

XXXI.

Not, as with fashion of that twilight time
When sky-born Truth, by priestly hands arrayed
In vulgar vestments of the motley mime,
Played conjuror in “dim religious” shade,—
And peasant thrall, by bell and book dismayed,
Glanced tremblingly on corbel, niche, and pane,
Where imp, saint, angel, knight with battle-blade,
Griffin, bat, owlet, more befooled the swain,
Till, when the incense fumed, round swum his wilder'd brain ;

XXXII.

Not, after pattern, of old monkish mode ;
Not, as by wand of mitred magic hung,
The rocky arch that mystic aisle bestrode,—
While clustered shaft, and twisted pillar sprung
Forth from the floor,—and floral festoons flung
Their chrystal witchery from base to quoin,—
And ever-changing shapes in antics clung
To shaft and capital, festoon and groin,
Seeming all forms of life,—all grace of flowers to join ;

XXXIII.

But unimagined, unconceived, unknown,
Unspeakable, by man, seemed all revealed
To those awed travellers, as they journeyed on
Through that vast aisle,—that rather glowed a field
Of caverned wonders, where each shape did yield,
For evermore, new changes,—till the soul,—
Enervate with o’crpiled amazement, reeled
And sank, wishing an end unto her dole
Of wond’ring,—pining, now, for prospect of her goal.

XXXIV.

Anon, we entered where the travellers took
Their silent way, each to some several home.
Light fled,—and dim funereal gloom rewoke
A solemn sadness through my being. Dome,
Or cupola,—scooped in mid rock, like tomb
Primeval,—high above me stretched its span
Gigantic, vague,—appearing to enwomb
A space so vast that there old Death divan
Might hold, in mausoleum metropolitan.

XXXV.

Innumerable aisles their paths diverse
Forth from this sombrous centre led. And now,
I first perceived,—from law which did coerce
The traveller-ghosts who reached these realms of woe
My spirit grew exempt. Sad, gloomy, slow,
The forms, of late my fellows, I descried
Journeying along those aisles,—deep, lasting throe
To inchoate, for sin of suicide,
In clime apportioned to their gloom, or hate, or pride.

XXXVI.

No words revealed to me the end or cause
For which those spirits hither came or went ;
Nor know I if I knew that region's laws
By some strange influences incident
Unto its clime,—or whether, now unblent
With earth's gross mould, deep intuition filled
The regal mind,—and thus, plenipotent,
She saw and knew. Suffice it,—what she willed
To know—that knowledge swift throughout her essence thrilled.

XXXVII.

Conscious of this her high prerogative,
The soul for mystic travel girt her thews,—
Intent on viewing shapes she knew must live
In land where penance rebel thought subdues
Of human worms who venture to refuse
The gift of life probational,—and death
Procure by their own hand, daring accuse
The Giver, and defying threatened wrath,—
Or worn and wearied with the toil of drawing breath.

XXXVIII.

Methought I sped across the gloomy space
From whence diverged each subterranean aisle,—
Thinking the dome vast porch unto some place
Of emblem'd sovereignty, or typic pile
Where sceptred suicides in kingly style
Might sit, as in some high imperial hall,
And there eternity itself beguile
With pregnant descant on their earthly fall,—
On fate,—on mortal change,—and being spiritual.

XXXIX.

When lo !—as if these new imaginings
Flowed from the soul with architectural power,—
Or talisman of magic Esterlings
Were there the unbound mind's mysterious dower,—
Forthwith disclosed,—in high investiture
Of purple, sceptres, thrones, and diadems,—
A hall of kings assembled gleamed, obscure,—
Fair,—and then bright,—until refulgent streams
Of splendour issued from their brows begirt with gems.

XL.

Mingled with these sat ancient forms unnamed
Monarchal, but by badge or cognizance
Vice-regal known, or whose sage look proclaimed
The godlike legislator, or proud glance
Betokened bold ambition's heritage
On earth of sway despotic. Deeply fraught
With wisdom's lessoning the soul her trance
Perceived to be,—'mid thrones with sculptures wrought
Mythic or parabolic, from earth's legends caught.

XLI.

By beam or rafter architectonic
Undarken'd,—with a roof of rainbows graced,
Smiled that wide palace-hall :—yet, upward, quick
And tim'rous looks old shapes columnar cast—
That stretched their sinews as with effort vast
To prop the heavenly arch whose fall they feared :—
Distorted things—abortions of the Past—
They were : Satyrs, with wild-goats' legs and beard,
And one-eyed Arimasp and Cyclops, there appeared ;

XLII.

Scythians, with heel in front, and toes behind ⁽¹⁾,—
On old Imaus known ; and Ethiops dark
And headless, wearing mouth and eyes enshrined
In their huge breasts ; and countless monsters stark
And staring, hymn'd divine by hierarch
Of Ganges and old Nile,—with heads, tails, arms,
Tusks, horns, confused, of elephant, ape, shark,
Serpent, dog, crocodile, or ox : vile swarms
Of hideous phantasies, half-sharing human forms.

XLIII.

In triple colonnade around th' immense
Ellipsis of that hall these creatures stood,—
Colossal images of ache intense
And apprehensive dread ;—while o'er them bowed
The arch that still in jewelled beauty glowed.—
Such horror, blent with grace, Apollo's priest
'Mid strangling folds of Neptune's serpents shewed,—
And still doth shew—enmarbled, undeceased,—
That breathing stone the Past to gem the Future leased ⁽²⁾.—

XLIV.

Area within, enclosed, of amplitude
More spacious stretched than wide circumference
Of sculptured temple, by far traveller viewed
In Hindoo cave ⁽³⁾,—or where wild audience
The Arab gives to hoar Magnificence
Defying Ruin, and in some huge tomb,
Hewed for a monarch, nightly sleeps,—from whence,
I' th' morn, he blesses Mecca's seer,—while gloom
Eterne veils Memnon's brow beholding 'Thebes' sad doom ⁽⁴⁾.¹

XLV.

Throughout this column-girt enclosure rose
Thrones,—some with fashion of a fortalice
Or tower; some, like cathedraled shrine where vows
Are paid to saintly heritor of bliss,
Shewed niche, and pinnacle, and quaint device
Of carven wonder-work; while some parade
Outvied of old renowned Acropolis
Or Parthenon, where graceful shaft o'erlaid
With bossed entablature Man's noblest skill displayed.

XLVI.

Significant depicturings of fraud
Conjunct with force,—chimæras blending grim
Fierce forms with fascinations,—shapes that awed
Pelagic men in ages old and dim,—
For metope, along the plinth's broad rim,
'Tween gem-dropp'd triglyphs,—wore each classic throne :
Rapine of harpy, smile of siren prim,
Lewd lure of lamia, wile of sphinx, and frown
Of minotaur and archer-centaur there were shewn.

XLVII.

Or, where a shrine-shaped throne, o'ercanopied
With perforated carvery, rose,—a pile
Of frail aërial wonder,—typified
Were Fright and Mischief mixt with Stealth and Guile :
Hag rode her broomstaff, flankt with bugbear vile
And goggle-eyed hobgoblin, while a host
Led by Puck-Hairy mocked with infantile
And puny trick the snake that wreathed and tossed
His trail around the skull and cross-bones of grim ghost.

XLVIII.

Mute,—wonder-stricken,—long, methought, I gazed,
 And, pond'ring, did my vision's meaning read ;
 Until the tenants of the thrones sense raised
 Within me of their presence there, flesh-freed.
 No sage interpreter I seemed to need
 From whom to learn their names : without a veil
 Unto the soul, the pride, pain, thought, or deed
 That rent them from earth's tabernacles frail,
 Lay opened—by some fiat supernatural.—

XLIx.

Silver tiara, decked with amethysts
 And sapphires, piling gorgeously above
 His brow,—pearl-studded circlets round his wrists,—
 Gold sceptre mounted by an emerald dove,—
 And dazzling gems of myriad hues enwove
 Throughout his robes wherein the peerless dye
 Of rarest murex with the ruby strove
 For richness,—shewed that soft Assyrian nigh
 Who closed his life of lust—a self-incendiary.

L.

On either side Sardanapalus sat,
 On thrones ornate of ivory and gold,—
 Cloud wrapt, that gray Cathaian autocrat,
 With uneuphonic name (⁵) in records old
 Of Orient writ, who did his life enfold
 With deathly flames ;—and that foul glutton, who,
 As sages tell, his maw's capacious hold
 To satisfy, worried his spouse, although
 Full-supper'd,—Cambles,—lord of Lydia's pampered crew.

LI.

Next these, three mystic thrones: the Theban chief
Who solved the Sphinx's riddle,—son and spouse
Of Creon's daughter,—suicide of grief,
Horror, and madness, joined: sad Nauplius,
The sire of Palamedes, who his house
Brought low by guileful Ithacus deplored;
And that Athenian exarch, old Ægeus,
Who, of his death,—fearing his son devoured,—
Left, in the Hellene island-wave a dim record.

LII.

Illustrious less by sheen and garniture
Of gold and gems, than by his kingly height
Colossal, sat the Hebrew, who a cure
For fallen fortunes, in his grievous plight,
At Endor sought,—but, from the hoary sprite
Of Israel's seer no health or help derived.
On demi-throne, next, that disastrous wight
Who Baasha's son of sovereignty deprived,
In Tirzah, and himself a seven days' king survived. (6)

LIII.

Of Ilion's foes, when stern Pelides fell,
The boldest,—but of honour shorn, and driven
By pride to madness,—with enduring hell
Of hate upon his girded brow, though riv'n
From earth, sat Telamon. A haloed heav'n
Of splendour dawned where crownless Codrus, throned
By frowning Ajax, smiled: his soul's look leav'n
Of low self-love disdained,—and, still, profound
Regard for fatherland seemed in its essence wound.

LIV.

Fraternal spirits,—each with civic palm
Invested, sceptreless,—o'er deepest thought
Brooding of things to come,—Lycurgus, calm
And dignified and peaceful, sat, and caught
With friendly grasp the hand unto him raught
Of brave Charondas : these, enthroned 'mid ray
Of kindred light, looked as they would devote
Their souls once more to Hades, if the days
Returned when men would die their fellow-man to raise.

LV.

Traitor to Freedom when the Alban sires
Had smitten kings with rout, and made their name
A stench,—the lewdling sat (7), whose foul desires
Sought for their victim one whose spotless fame
Her father saved, and snatched from maiden shame,
Devoting to stern Death his virgin child.
On more than regal throne, with amorous flame
Still glowing in his eyes, next the defiled
Decemvir, sat another lust-slave, self-exiled

LVI.

From his old riot-field,—for such he made
The earth, that, by strange turns, is cursed with feud
And sport of monsters. Neighbour to this shade
Of Antony, and chief of Rome's huge brood
Of tyrants, sat the matricide whom mood
Of insane merriment to minstrelsy
Impelled, when wearied with his game of blood,
He loosed the fiends of havoc, that, with glee,
Lit up Rome's flames, and howled to swell his jubilee.

LVII.

'The' imperial patriot, Otho, that to save
'The blood of thousands shed his own, and quench'd
'The rage of war,—but vainly, since he gave
Earth to a tyrant,—sat next one who drench'd
'The soil less than he willed with gore, nor blench'd
At broken oaths in age,—Maximian,—thrall
Of power, though throned. Divided sceptre elench'd
Vile Bonosus the drunkard,—of whose fall
They said his carcase was 'a jug hung by the wall!'

LVIII.

And other revellers in bloody mirth,
Italian, or Byzantine, arrogant
And pride-blown, sat, as when the slavish earth
They shared ;—save when on that great combatant
Whom Pontic Orient and the rich Levant
Owned lord,—proud Mithridates,—timid look
They cast : for, as they glanced at him, ascaunt,
His eye of fire told how he ill could brook
The dwarfs so near ;—whereat their fear-smit spirits shook.

LIX.

Neighb'ring with his stood Juba's ivory throne,—
'The Mauritanian : next, in meek array,
'The Paphian sat,—Nicocles,—who alone
Fled not dishonour when the conqu'ring sway
Of Ptolemy fair Cyprus owned : the way
He took his bosom's queen and daughters fair
'Took also,—and now shared the regal ray
That clad their chief : a group of Love they were,
Among fierce shapes of pride that haughtily sat there.

LX.

Nor was the suicide of softer sex
By these shewn only. Near the ancient seat
Of Œdipus, the mystical reflex
Appeared of her who hasted to complete
The Fates' decree, when Meleager's feat
Was known,—burning the billet she had kept
To save the life that now was hateful. Meet
Sisters, numerous, by Althæa slept,—
Or gazed stonily,— forms by Mythic names yclept.

LXI.

Radiant in widowed beauty, next to these
Sat she who loved her wandering Teucrian guest,
And raved to find the faithless one rude seas
Had borne away,—till, for her grief-worn breast
Within the wave she sought a deathful rest.
Near Dido sat that mournful mother-queen,
Meek Sisygambis, who fled life distress
By death of Philip's son, still more than teen
That she the slaughter of her discrowned son had seen.

LXII.

With ardent glance on her old paramour,
The soft Triumvir, bending,—amid waste
Of grandeur throned,—outvieing, as of yore,
Earth's kings in pride, earth's harlots in unchaste
And wanton thought,—sat she from Greek dynast
Of Nile descended,—asp-stung heritress
Of fame for lavish wealth with lavish haste
Consumed upon her beauty's slaves: excess
Transcended only by her false heart's fickleness.

LXIII.

Apart, in lonely loftiness of soul,
Sat Boadicea, simple, unadorned,—
Yet seeming with stern virtue to control
The scoffing spirit which my thought discerned
Within a frivolous crowd that there sojourned
In visioned queenly state.—

But now my trance
Teemed with more wonder,—for, enwrapt, I learned
These spirits' thoughts : no vocal resonance
There was : yet soul to soul made mystic utterance.—

LXIV.

Thy prophecy, sage Spartan,—proudly gibed,
Amid his pomp, the Chaldee's glistening shade,—
'Thy prophecy—grows old : still monarch-tribed
And rainbow-vaulted is this hall : they fade
Not yet—these regal splendours ! Disarrayed
We are, by turns ;—to periodic pain,
On joyless wand'rings sent, through bog and glade,
O'er crag and rock,—or burnt or frore,—our stain
To purge : yet, in due season, thus restored we reign !

LXV.

Err'st thou not here, presaging utter change
To kingly spirits, as thou err'dst in land
Of Lacedæmon old, when system strange
By thy fantastic brain was hotly planned,
'To train rude rabble Greeks in self-command,
And mould their minds to virtue ?—foolish dream
Long dissipated ! Spartan, thus divanned,
Crowned, sceptred, and enthroned, the stream
Of ceaseless being shall find our essences supreme.

LXVI.

Such is my sentence,—from the pregnant past
Arguing the future : and in vain they prate
Of inborn might and energy amassed
Up in all minds, who say th' unequal state
In Hades, or on earth, shall terminate.
Where are the virtues by thy statutes bred ?
Our Asia's conqu'ring hosts—effeminate
Esteemed by the rude sires thy black broth fed—
Brandish the scymitar o'er their tame children's head.

LXVII.

There *must* be conqu'ring lords, and slaves that yield :
There *hath* been,—and there *will* be. Thou may'st stroke
Thy beard, grave scorner,—slighting truth revealed
By eld experience ! Wherefore bear their yoke
Earth's mortal millions ?—why, in one age shook
From their sire's shoulders do the sons upheave
And wear it, in the next ? Hath a realm broke
Its golden sceptre ?—'Twas but to receive
A stranger's iron rod,—beneath its bruise to grieve.

LXVIII.

Danaian,—Monarchs rule by Nature's law ;
And all who seek Her statutes to disturb,—
Teaching kings' solemn titles have foul flaw
In reason, and the general mind should curb
Their sovereign will, or sweep from earth's wide orb
Their honoured name,—know thou, he would uproot
All happiness from human hearts, perturb
All peace, and fill the world with dissolute
And lawless beings tending downwards to the brute.

LXIX.

What mean, I ask thee, these thronged typic forms,—
 These images of allegoric shape?—
 Thou say'st, false-seeing prophet, that dire storms
 Will burst upon our being, and with gape
 Of chaos tomb these thrones! Aha! a jape
 It is—such as thou told'st, in olden time,
 When Greeks from Delphos thy return, agape,
 Expected. Spartan, know, a truth sublime
 These portraitures set forth, in this mysterious clime:—

LXX.

This sky of promise-woof,—these shapes of strength,—
 These sceptred pomps and blazonries, combine
 With this vast palace-hall's imperial length
 And architectural splendour,—by divine
 Working of Nature,—Her superb design
 To manifest—that She hath firmly set
 The frame of things—the frame of things benign!
 Kings reign by Nature's law! I at thy threat
 Of dissolution laugh! 'Tis like thyself—a cheat!

LXXI.

By hybrid forms, like these, the sage or bard
 Of old pictured deep thoughts: he, prescient
 Of mortal things, not dimly Mind's award
 In after-life foresaw: and thus hath lent
 Wise Nature, here, familiar emblems, meant
 T' infix our spirits' rev'rence of Her high
 Unchangeable decrees. Other intent
 Wombed in the soul o' th' world, if thou descry,
 Lacon, these potencies, with me, thy proof defy!—

LXXII.

He ceased, but the Laconian answered not,
Save with a smile; whereat, in subtle guise,
The spirit of pale Chow the theme upcaught,
Echoing the proud Assyrian's auguries
Of endless royalty.—To myste-
rize I scorn,—he said: the sage of great Cathay
By allegory taught,—the teacher wise
Before all mortals; but, now freed from clay,
Truth's visage all unveiled Mind may to Mind display.

LXXIII.

The sacred sage who aims with sanctions strong
Of faith and fear, fable and prodigy,
To fence the throne,—humanely to prolong
Peace, order, seeks: for peace and order flee
That state disrupt by anarch Liberty—
The wild destructive demon!—and when peace
And order fade, fades every good: while free
Confusion's vot'ries call a realm,—surcease,
Therein, all polished forms and winning courtesies:

LXXIV.

These constitute the sweets of human life,—
Rend'ring its gall less mortal,—as renews
Our vigour this resplendent vision rife
With promise,—this bright pomp that, swift, subdu-
All sense of pain, doubt, fear, which us pursues
In mystic seasons when high Powers exact
Their penalties,—high Powers unseen that use
Their creature Man according to some pact
Beyond our scope—but held eternally infract.

LXXV.

To mysteize I scorn—yet own the task
Of labouring sages guerdon doth deserve
Of thanks from kings : they clothe with prudent mask
The image from whose worship Man might swerve
If nuded : they contribute to conserve
Homage of monarchs, awe of gods, restraint
Of wholesome reverence for law, and nerve
The arm of old authority,—that taint
Would sap, of weakness,—wanting aids thus ministrant.

LXXVI.

But I disdain to mysteize : let pass
The fables of old bards, —and thy far view
Truthful experience guiding,—scorning glass
Of types and stale conjectures,—Spartan, due
Observance take that novelties congrue
But ill with social weal : while bloom and thrive,
Through endless ages, lands whose tribes eschew
Disloyalty,—where sons meek sires survive
Preserving, piously, their customs primitive.

LXXVII.

There knowledge grows ;—hale labour fills the realm
With teeming plenty ;—life doth, vig'rous, strike
Its roots into the soil ;—and swarms that whelm
With ruin lands more changeful where dislike
To rev'rend custom lifts the rebel pike
Or traitor dagger,—drain deep bog and swamp,—
Delve the stiff marl,—yea, on the bald cliff, like
The eagle nestle,—strewing mould, with tramp
Industrious, on the rock : their zeal what toil can damp ?

LXXVIII.

There arts that rise in the far mist of ages
Are cherished and preserved with sacred care ;
And, if aught nobler lore of later sages
Evolves, no sacrilegious hands uprear
The roots of ancient wisdom,—but, by rare
And tender husbandry, the late-found flower
Is with the old engrafted,—and, thenceforth, bear
Their wedded branches fruits that richer shower
Wide o'er the blest, peace-nurtured land their bounteous dower.

LXXIX.

Proud Greek, I ask thee, where is now the boast
Of gay and changeful Hellas ?—where the pride
Of wisdom, valour, song,—your wave-washed coast,
Ye said, would wear for aye ? Doth it abide
Where sage Minerva's owl still sits to chide
Old Echo, when some lingering column falls
On grey Athenæ's waste, at eventide ?—
Or glows it from the brows of Theban thralls
And Spartan cowards—a barbarian's frown appals ?

LXXX.

Graian, behold from China's terraced mountains
Meek, peaceful myriads to the plains descend,
And, with their brethren by the silver fountains
Reclining,—to some hoary teacher lend
Enraptured audience, while his lips commend
The lessons of the ever-honoured seer
Whose wisdom's lustre doth as far transcend
The glimmering lights your westerlings revere,
As doth the orient sun outvie each smaller sphere.

LXXXI.

Behold the greatness of the Flowery Nation
Attracting wond'ring eyes from all the earth,—
While countless tongues rehearse loud commendation
Of vast Cathay :—how science had her birth,
In peaceful secret, there,—and glided forth
From her pure cradle, like a godlike thing,
Blessing unboastfully !—pouring her worth
Of wisdom on the world,—but of her spring
Primeval to the infant isles ne'er whispering.

LXXXII.

Behold how earth's united sages crowd
To pay their homage at the shrine maternal
To which old Northmen wild the mute guide owed
That led them o'er the deeps where regions vernal
Breathed their rich balm, when light of stars supernal
Was hid—the mystic needle—to the pole
Leal ever, as, to Wisdom's truths eternal,—
By sage Confucius opened,—ages roll
And still find China's children cleaving with one soul.

LXXXIII.

Or art,—held magic once,—that spreads the glory
Of thought with speed,—by which the peasant hind,
Familiar as the prince, talks with bard hoary
Whose bones are wind-spread atoms, but whose mind
Still lives, converses, fulmines, splendour-shrined
Upon the lettered page ;—while pyramid
And column, arch and dome, taunt human kind
With ruin, where the founders' names are hid,—
And dust becomes of Death a mirror pellucid.

LXXXIV.

Or delicatest skill, by which the worm
Yields up the riches of her soft cocoon
Where bounteous nature teacheth her to form
For royalty and beauty,—lustrous boon !—
The fabric for their robes, or proud festoon
That decks their palaces :—or various art
Pictorial, that by tapestry, cartoon,
Canvass, or marble,—where dead forms upstart
To life,—sublime instruction doth to man impart :—

LXXXV.

All the wide world inherits of the wealth
Of wisdom, Genius, skill,—attribute now,
The truly wise unto those steps of stealth
With which the Genius of the land of Foh
Clomb Himaleh's tall barriers of snow
To kindle light celestial on the strand
Of infant India,—whence, as sages shew,
The Chaldee, Mitzraim, and thy later land,
Achaian, lit their lamps with an ungenerous hand.

LXXXVI.

The borrowed lights are quenched : the parent flame
Glows with undimmed and steady lustre, still !—
Babel and Thebes, and Athens, have a name
With things that were,—or claim from infantile
Far-islet harps and voices strains that chill
With sense of desolation them that waken
Their deathful echoes : Life and vigour fill
Ancestral Cambalu,—whose strength unshaken
By China's thousand pristine cities is partaken.

LXXXVI.

Spartan, I challenge thee upon this theme,—
Disdaining mystery. Obedience meek
To the paternal wearer of the diadem
Sways the vast heart of China : fathers seek
Like rev'rence from their sons ; and children speak
A filial language, through the land, unknown
To kingless libertines. The fruit unique
Of natural monarchy, through ages shewn,—
Peace, shedding gladness, on my fatherland hath grown.

LXXXVIII.

And why we thus hold thrones doth thence result,—
I judge,—that great maternal Nature keeps
Her purposes : here, witness we th' adult
Expressions of Her will : on earth she heaps
Monitions that Man's welfare reaps
Its thrift from kings : now, after-life doth prove
Her unity of wisdom ;—and, while sweeps
Duration on, in kingly souls enwove
Shall grow intenser consciousness of Nature's love.—

LXXXIX.

Thus spake the old Cathaian shade, and ceased ;
While sceptred spirits, in refulgent rays,
Sent forth from their deep essence bright attest
Of grateful joy. Such spiritual praise
These render ; but a gathering gloom betrays
Some scorner 'mid the radiant effluence
Of gladdened mind. Surceased the mystic blaze,
And uprose Antony,—these thoughts prepense
Verbing of haught disdain, from his pride's prurience :—

XC.

That regal souls shall regally possess
This heritage, nor presaged ruin hurl
These powers to nought, needs not thy wilderness
Of proof, dim Shade ! When penal tempests curl
Round us their waves we sink not in their whirl,—
But thus retrieve our thrones. Why seek we more ?
Let those that prophesy the prince and churl,
New equals, shall on this mysterious shore
Exist, shew whence derived their visionary lore.

XCI.

Till then, I scorn their lures,—as now I scorn,
Cathaian fabler, what thou dost miscount
Of undisturbed regalities age-worn.
I tell thee, cloud-clad king, souls paramount
Become by Fate : Nature in her great fount
Moulds monarchs—who earth's sceptres seize, and thrust
Old palsied cumber-thrones aside, to mount,
Themselves, the seat of sway,—aye, with robust
Hand, pile crown upon crown on their own brows august.

XCII.

These are Her darlings—though a coarse-fed serf
Bring forth their clay, and ignorantly hush
Within his mud-built shed the cradled dwarf
At whose full voice the bright-armed throng shall rush
To conquest, and whose hand, time-nerved, shall crush
Old poms like rotten reeds. These Nature rears
In native loftiness : old monarchs blush
When they behold them, or wax wan with fears ;—
For, on their ominous front, deep-graved, stern change appears.

XLIII.

Stern change—but needful : for, thou dost indulge
Earth's partial love,—Cathaian trumpeter,—
Denying that great Nature's laws promulge
The healthfulness of change. Light task it were
To dash thy brittle images, and blurr
Their tricky tints to gangrened, livid hues ;
To show how Misery finds no comforter
Throughout thy fatherland ; how Want subdues
All virtue in its monster cities' dark purlieus ;

XCIV.

To point thee to the life its millions drag,—
Its famine-stricken millions,—eager, glad,
To find a putrid dog for food, or rag
To hide their nakedness :—gaunt man, driven mad
By hunger and oppression, to these sad
And dreary shades fleeing for refuge from
His hell on earth :—pale woman, loath to add
More wretched things to Life's slow martyrdom,
Strangling, remorselessly, the fruit of her own womb !

XCV.

Light task it were, gray fabler, to lift up
The silken curtain thou hast, sleekly, cast
O'er the huge tombs of city-life where droop,
In squalor, human shapes become repast
For vermin e'er they die :—from whom, aghast,
Thy mandarins, of boasted courtesy,
Would turn and shriek, as if the black plague's blast
Had blown on them. I scorn to answer thee
At large,—threading thy labyrinthine eulogy,—

XCVI.

Or, I would utter all the horrid tale
Of infant murder, starving toil, accurst
Desire for gold, devices of the pale
And cunning bonze, conceit of idiots nurst
In ign'rance,—crime and folly that will burst
Upon the world, and tell its own strange story,
Ere long. To regal spirits what rehearsed
Thou hast—let this suffice!—for, now, the glory,
Of thy dim land, like other dreams, grows transitory.

XCVII.

The restless pirates of the northern isles,—
Breaking your barriers of three thousand years,—
With their own eyes, your land of fabled smiles
Behold,—and find it but a land of tears—
Like to their own. While woman's form appears
Bowed with her infant on her back, in mud
To th' waist, to till the rice-plant toiling,—cheers,
Though savagely, this thought their frozen blood—
That equal degradation hath, but yet subdued

XCVIII.

One of their sea-girt homes—Hibernia!—there,
Gray dynast,—if with disembodied mind,
Throughout these shades, thou dost deep descant share,—
Like squalid want and suffering, intertwined
With life of crowds that labour, thou wilt find—
And only there! Oh, that old Rome could wake,
Once more, her victor eagles, and unbind
These slaves from their vile fetters,—or earth shake
With change until they could, themselves, their bondage break!

XCIX.

Thou fabling phantasm,—what hath man become,
 Sunk in the stagnancies of custom old?—
 A creature who will whine to win the crumb
 His tyrant's dog refuses! If the bold
 Democracy of buried Rome,—controlled,
 Ev'n by earth's masters, but with dole of bread
 Dealt to them daily,—could such slaves behold—
 Such breadless slaves—o'er earth's old region tread,—
 Their fleshless shades would frown among the doom'd dead!

C.

Thou art rebuked, justly: yet, controvert
 I not thy sentence, that with regal state
 Dynamic essences shall be begirt
 Through ceaseless life: I only deprecate
 Thy errors: claiming for the child of Fate—
 The natural heir of greatness—that award
 His deeds deserve. Monarchs, *we* create
 Anew, your strength! Not fabling sage or bard,—
 But *we*—Fate's darlings—merit grateful kings' regard!——

CI.

Thus ended, like an actor for applause,
 He who a haughty challenger began,—
 Winning no meed of praise where all grew foes,
 Stung by his scorn, or scorning, while, with scan
 Of spirits, they beheld his vanity outran
 Truth's soberness. He sank with humbled crest—
 Perceiving frowns sit on each ghostly van
 Of those throned powers. Forthwith made manifest
 His mental throes Nero's prond spirit of unrest.——

CII.

That thrones to thy stout valour owe huge debt,—
He spake, casting around a withering smile ;—
Is true as that thou wert an anchoret !
Hero of Actium !—Vestal of the Nile !—
No time, on earth, your effigies shall spoil
Of lasting laurels,—wreath so fitly blending
With Daphne's virtue valour without soil !
In Hades, triumphs, coy loves never ending
Shall still be yours,—the future the bright past transcending !

CIII.

Darling of Fate !—to swell thy self-sung laud
Let spirits vie ! let grateful kings bow down
And homage thee,—by loud trump overawed
Of thy great glory, which thyself hast blown !
Vauntful buffoon,—that thou dost fill a throne
In this mysterious clime, adds to the scourge
Of princely spirits : mockeries, this crown
And sceptre I pronounce,—whate'er some urge
Of ceaseless pomp,—if shapes like thine these visions forge.

CIV.

What wert thou but an upstart and an ape
Of spirits truly regal who thy freak
Of kingship suffered, till maturer shape
Their own great plans of sovereignty could take ?
Fawning on Julius, who beneath thy sleek
Exterior saw and mocked the thrifless flame
For empire,—or, on young Octavius meek
And crafty, hurling sneers,—thy petty game
Subserved the master-spirits of the Roman drame.

CV.

And when thou hadst subverted their astute end
Thou wast laid by. Boaster,—'tis not the fool
Who blabs his aims, and thinks each man a friend,
Whom nature marks for empire : but a tool
She shaped him ; and, to spirits born for rule
He hath his use,—to Fate's true darlings, skilled
To hide their reach with feigned indiff'rence cool,
Or virtuous humbleness, and ever filled,
With wary watch of all by whose lent thews they build.

CVI.

Our Roman greatness by such masonry
Of mind was raised, until the Julian boy
Laid on the top-stone with felicity
Of skill : ever of power appearing coy,—
Continuing antique symbols to employ,—
Titles and forms of the old commonwealth,—
Hallowing the shade securely to destroy
The substance of licentiousness : wise stealth,
By which the pulse of sovereignty gained vigorous health.

CVII.

With ' bread and theatres' the vulgar gasp
Was wisely fed, when Wisdom thus had won
The earth's rich rule : to our illustrious grasp
The reins of empire were bequeathed,—our own
By right of power, craft, favour : handed down
Entire by us,—the pusillanimous brood
Of later days reared a divided throne,
And lost the heritage whose amplitude
Comprised the general world's wealth, wisdom, hardihood.

CVIII.

Not more I mock when cloud-wrapt shadows doat,
And fondly prate of barbarous unknown shores,—
Than I despise ye,—sceptrelings distraught
With pride,—souls of empireless emperors,—
That round me sit ! How rich a dower was yours !
By how much toil of sinew and of mind
Collected, conglobated, were Earth's stores
Treasured in Rome,—the Eternal !—throne assigned
By Nature and the Gods for sway of humankind !

CIX.

Never shall men, again, view aught august
And glorious as Rome—that mighty heart
O' th' world whose pulses fed with life robust
By million health-fraught veins, mingling athwart
Her giant trunk, did duly re-impart
Vigour and strength to every distant limb !
How gazeth, even now, the Afric swart,
Fierce frozen Celt, Teuton, or Tartar grim,
Untombing some huge vertebra or relic dim

CX.

Of Rome's vast skeleton,—a monstrous bulk
O'er isles and continents that lies, supine,—
Wondering what giant soul the mighty hulk
Served, in far unknown age, for earthen shrine !
Dwarfed, dastard heirs to Cæsar's lofty line,—
If courage to defend what they bequeathed,—
If soul to comprehend their grand design,—
They could on your weak essences have breathed,—
Rome's life with glory had been perdurably wreathed !

CXI.

Inferior natures,—your effeminate gripe
 Of the world's sceptre was dissolved like dew
 Upon the grass what time the sun doth wipe
 Up evening's lingering tears : so feeble grew
 Your grasp of power the Roman world scarce knew
 Ye had a throne, at last,—for ye had ceased
 To be its masters long before it threw
 Your filmy fetters off to don the vest
 Of vassalage unto the smooth, tiara'd priest.

CXII.

Ye despicable things, that sit and swell
 Yourselves in empty pomp—ye that betrayed
 Rome's glory to the Goth—

Vile spirit, quell

The tempest of thy madness !—spake the shade
 Of fierce Maximian :—Who dost thou upbraid,—
 Coward, with tim'rousness ?—monster, with vice
 And idle dissoluteness ?—Of all who swayed
 Earth's sceptres, thou unworthiest shar'st this bliss—
 These shadowed thrones in spiritual necropolis !

CXIII.

Slanderer,—remember that Maximian strove
 To prop the falling state,—nor age his hands
 Unsinewed for the sword ; but round him wove
 Their fatal net domestic traitor bands.
 That one, stern Truth with foulest vices brands,
 Doth play the chidester, here,—one, who should hide
 His head in shame, uncensured reprimands
 Thrones who excel in virtue,—doth betide,
 I fear, our essence still to weakness misallied.

CXIV.

Thrones of the West,—why sit ye tamely, thus,—
Bearing reproach from a vile miscreant
Whose name doth blot Rome's annals?—

Nebulous

With thought grew, now, the spirits habitant
Of neigh'ring thrones, seeming with wrath to pant
And throb, as throbs the thunder cloud : their rage
Soon burst in tumult : Nero, scornful taunt
Renewed ; and Rome's whole self-slain lineage
Seemed on each other clamorous, ireful war to wage.—

CXV.

As, when upon a seat of gamesome hares,
Or brood of quarrellous birds, the soaring kite
Stoops suddenly, victor with vanquished shares,
Silent and swift retreat,—so shrunk with fright
To ignominious dumbness each fierce sprite
Of haughty Rome when rose the Pontic king,—
Hurling a frown of intellectual might
Among their cowering sceptres,—scattering
Their pride,—and thus his own soul's contest symboling :

CXVI.

I marvel not,—illustrious Spartan ghost,—
That thou, with truest sapience, dost leave
Rome's mimic gladiators to be tossed
With rage of earth's old pride—which still doth cleave
To these thin vehicles, and, perhaps, will grieve
And vex our fleshless essences for aye :—
I marvel not, that, scorning to achieve
A worthless conquest, to commutual fray
Thou leav'st thy foes :—let Folly, kindred Folly, slay !

CXVII.

Let Rome's throned pigmies argue, answerless!—
 A brood on whom I grudgingly bestow
 A frown,—recalling Sylla's dreadlessness,
 Gorgeous Lucullus, and the godlike brow
 Of Pompey,—minds that, each, to have for foe,
 Ennobled strife more than the glittering stake
 Of Asia's sceptres, and magnificent show
 Of six-score realms in arms—of whom none spake
 A tongue their chief unknew,—nor burned his yoke to break.

CXVIII.

But, while ignoble combat of the soul
 Thou nobly scorn'st,—I marvel,—Graian wise,
 That, here, in Hades, thou dost seek control
 O'er mightier essences, by worn-out guise
 Of mystery : not to antagonize
 Thy spirit I seek,—but challenge pertinent
 And weighty cause for startling prophecies
 Of dissolution. How to thee hath lent
 Unerring Nature, Her divine premonishment ?

CXIX.

Since, in this after-life, no more by dull
 Deceptive sense, from sound, sight, touch, doth earn
 The labouring soul her knowledge ;—and, though full
 Of images our being, since all intern
 They germ, and, from our working thought yborn,
 Take spiritual embodiment ;—since live
 These shapes by plastic throes with which we yearn
 Essentially,—and Essence can derive
 No unknown truth from the mere representative

CXX.

Of its own ever-active energy ;—
Since all we view, or seem to view, in space
Irradiate with emblemed royalty,
Is reflex of ourselves,—and we erase
These splendours when, by Nature's law, to trace
Again our steps o'er penal wilds we range,—
Or seem to range,—and with refulgent grace
Resume these thrones, in season due ; since change
Of bliss, or woe,—by law inexplicably strange,—

CXXI.

Results from our own intellectual force ;—
What warrants thee predicting force shall whelm
Our regal state with ruin, in the course
Of spiritual duration, and disrealm
Hades of kings, humble the trophied helm
Of all her myriad heroes, and exalt
The serfs of her mysterious penal realm
To equal state,—never to know default
Or end, beneath the glory of this gem-prankt vault ?

CXXII.

What canst thou know,—though intellection deep
Be thine,—that we know not ? Thou shar'st our pain,
When pain returns. If o'er thy essence sweep
Like woes with ours, how doth to thee pertain
Superior potency ? Lacon, explain
Thy bold vaticinations,—or, henceforth,
Expect from spiritual thrones disdain
And dumb contempt, or tempest of their mirth,—
When to more dark-womb'd wonders thou giv'st dreaming birth !

CXXIII.

So spake the soul of Mithridates, while
Awe or approving silence held the Thrones
Who in that mystic clime of self-exile
Kept disembodied pomp of glistening crowns
And lustrous sceptres. Veiled with gloom of frowns,
Or lit with eagerness, each visage seemed,
Now, on the Spartan fixt. Soft spirit-tones
Of suaveness, soon, from his essence streamed ;
And thus, of past and future life, he calmly themed :

CXXIV.

Spirits of Men, with reverence whom I hail
And with fraternal love—albeit I deem
These sculptured blazonries a vision frail,—
Or, like their antitypes on earth, a dream,—
For that your high humanity supreme,
I judge, o'er names and empty pomps ;—forbear
To count me fabling fantast,—and beteen
Me, shunning mortal passion, to declare
My thought, by spiritual tongue auxiliar.

CXXV.

Contest I court not,—nor to wrathful strife
Seek to impel ye by defiance brave ;
Brothers, I wot, that earth's poor troublous life
Had storms enow : rude storms that hither drave
More than a moiety of ye that rave
Upon these thrones, contending as if wrath
Were reason. Sages say, on earth, the grave
Ends passion's turmoil, and the spirit hath,
In death, 'mid shapes all passionless, its gentle path.

CXXVI.

How little truth they knew !—how much affirmed
From love, hope, fear ! How little know we still !
How oft, when pleasing shapes from thought have germed
Within us, have we strengthened them with will
That they should live,—until they seemed to fill
Our utmost life ! Yet, were they things of nought,—
Soul-mists which phantom-essences distil,
In Hades,—as, on earth, ethereal, float,
From perfume and putrescence, vapours picture-fraught.

CXXVII.

Perchance thou judgest well,—sage Pontic shade,—
Attributing this typic statue-crowd,
And this enthroned and diadem'd parade,
To demiurgic power with which doth brood
The soul on space, verisimilitude
Of what it loves and wishes swift creating :—
Yet, if these shapes with substance unendowed
Thou deem'st,—and, like our being, vacillating,—
I argue, from past change, more change our state awaiting.

CXXVIII.

I seek no vulnerable thought to pounce
Upon, thy metaphysic argument
To frustrate ; nor will, rashly, aught pronounce
Of this strange after-life : Being still blent
With mystery we experience : aye, augment
Its wonders, here. When, therefore, I opine
Thou err'st, my spirit tells with diffident
Emotion that to other close than thine
Her slow deductions lead—pond'ring on this design ;

CXXIX.

Pledge of their perpetuity, or proof
That kings derive from Nature,—in these shapes,
Monstrous and fear-fraught, that to prop this roof
Preposterously essay,—if any, dim, escapes
My dull perception. Wondrous were collapse
Of heaven's own bow !—more wondrous if its fall
Could crush an insect ! Falsely thus bedrapes
Nature's fair face with fancies that appal,
He who mankind would for his selfish ends enthrall.

CXXX.

The Power that forms, supports, and governs Man,
Smiles on him evermore ; benignly woke
His infancy with love ; unfolds Its plan
Of happiness in the fair-written book
Of Man's own nature, and the forms that look
Upon his essence from the outward world ;
Implants no instinct in his breast to mock
His life ; but hath his sentient clay imperaled
With reason—sovereign gem in fragile folds enfurled.

CXXXI.

A thing of beauty, though but frail, in joy
Perpetual might his mortal life be past ;
But fblers do his peace and bliss destroy
With falsest fears : each hour is overcast
With sadness, and each breath an antepast
Becomes of some dread future, which, to shun,
He must propitiate mystic demons vast,
By rites that serve to load with pious boon
The smooth and crafty priest who consecrates the throne.

CXXXII.

Ye frown,—shadows of monarchs,—and deport
Yourselves full fiercely : yet, with mental eye
This vision scan,—and, that its forms consort
With truths I have proclaimed, and typify
Force joined with Fraud,—ye, also, will descry.
Do not your spirits bear me witness strong
That they the real monsters are who try
To fill man with belief that they prolong
His respite from some monstrous vengeance o'er him hung ?

CXXXIII.

Whether I read these images aright
Or err,—for high Humanity I claim
Precedence of all poms. Spirits, if might
Or wisdom are inherent in the name
Monarchal,—if the sceptre doth enflame
The soul of him who sways it with the thirst
For virtue,—if Time doth not count with shame
Its regal dolts and cowards, nor is curst
With vice of monster kings,—I have their names aspersed.

CXXXIV.

Let your own argument,—your sage debate,—
Confute me, when, in sorrowing ire, I say—
Your race, in every clime, doth merit hate
And vengeance from mankind—the trembling prey
Ye ever tortured ere ye deigned to slay !
But I renew not strife : spirits, I glow
With nobler aim—aside to see ye lay
These vanities, scorning the gaudy show
That emblems freedom's, virtue's, wisdom's direst foe :

CXXXV.

For such is kingship propp'd by altar-craft :
But I renew not strife : spirits, I stand
Self-senteneed, self-condemned, since to engraft,
Mystery with 'Truth, in my loved fatherland,
I sought,—judging mankind might be trepanned
To reverence Freedom when her virgin face,
Enmasked with sanctity, looked grave and grand :
Unskilled to know that her own native grace,
Alone, could charm men, lastingly, to her embrace.

CXXXVI.

Ye clepe me Prophet!—I accept the jest
For earnest ; and, with mystic wreath thus crowned
By your united voice, Mystery attest
To be the tyrant Power from whose profound
Soul-bondage Man is breaking ; whispering sound
Of Truth's young breath greets Europe's grateful ear ;
And Freedom, in some hearts, a throne hath found
On that new shore where still, alas ! appear
Earth's olden stains—the helot's stripes—the helot's tear !

CXXXVII.

Afric's dark tribes, and Asia's populous swarms,
The voice of Truth, and Freedom's holy call
Shall know, ere long—upstarting,—not to arms,
For blood and slaughter,—but to disenthral
Their new-born spirits from Faith's mystical
Degrading chains, and shake their ancient slough
Of sottish ignorance off : no more to crawl
In abjectness 'fore hideous gods, nor throw
Their slavish frames 'fore kings, in vile prostration low.

CXXXVIII.

Spirits, to tell of wondrous sympathy
Subsisting still,—despite our severance
From earth,—between flesh-clothed humanity
And unclothed Mind, were futile occupance
Of torture's lapse—which now doth swift advance,
As ye perceive, once more, unto its bourne.
Albeit uncomprehended, consonance
Of Mind's progression in this strange sojourn
Subsists, ye know, with minds of men on earth that mourn.

CXXXIX.

That Essences shall glad deliverance reach,
In penal clime of suicide,—our hope,
Unquenchable by torment, seems to teach ;
And spirits throughout Hades who in scope
Of mind excel, gathered in eloquent groupe,
Deep descant hold of glorious state to come
For men and spirits,—mystic horoscope
Interpreting—that, either side the tomb,
Men's weary souls, in unison, shall reach blest doom.

CXL.

And Minds presaging this deliverance blest
For fleshless essences,—for mortal men,
From bondage-toil and error, welcome rest,—
Foreshow that love fraternal with serene
And genial beam shall thaw the icy mien
Of selfishness to soft beneficence,—
Until, as yearned the godlike Nazarene,
It yearns o'er pain and woe, with affluence
Of healing help and soul restoring condolence.

CXLI.

Nor less presage they that the trodden crowd;
Long left to grovel in degrading mire
Of bruted life, and sunk in desuetude
Of reason's energy, her living fire
Shall feel anew, and nobly thence aspire
To feed the mind with knowledge till its thews
Acquiring might, they reassert their higher
Gradation spiritual. Such hope diffuse
Far-reaching spirits,—hope that ev'n despair subdues:

CXLIH.

Thrones,—ye perceive your splendours 'gin to pale;—
And soon we must our penal throes renew.
I cease my theme;—and may have erred,—for frail
Is still our wisdom: it may be, the Few
Shall still the Many trample and subdue:
That Truth and Liberty shall bloom—to die,—
Like glorious winged things, that, swift, pursue
The sunbeam-atoms for a day, then hie
To death,—blending, as 'twere, a breath—a smile—a sigh!

CXLIH.

It may be that the human soul is mixt
With nature of decadence and frail change,
Essentially: that never stably fixt,
But mutable, eternally to range
From ignorance to wisdom,—then, by strange
Return, to ignorance,—may be its fate,
Inevitably;—that when their brief revenge
Slaves take on tyrants, they emancipate
Themselves in vain,—And Nature doth their strife frustrate:

CXLIV.

Spirits, it may be emptier than a dream
That fair Equality shall one day hold
Sole sceptre on the earth : that Man shall deem
His brother man too sacred to be sold
Or slain,—to be by any power controlled,
Save the soft force of love and wisdom : field
It is for thought : thy dogma,—monarch old,—
‘There must be conqu’ring lords and slaves that yield’—
The Future may attest as the stained Past hath sealed.

CXLV.

These splendours pale ! Spirits, with me combine
Your sentence—that to this deep argument
Large aidant minds who tenant this confine
Be summoned, or invited, when hath spent
Our penance, next, on us, its chastisement :—
New lights on truth may issue from their rays
Of cogitation,—and some joint consent
Accrue to spirits from the confluent blaze
Of Essences, when each his glowing thought displays.—

CXLVI.

Lycurgus ceased : the column’d monster shapes
Wox dim to faintness ; and a hue of dread
Fell on each spirit, knowing torture’s lapse
Was ended. Ere their sceptred glory fled,
Methought, a dying beam of radiance shed
From each fast-fading visage did betoken
Mute acquiescence in their judgment bred
With fair proposal by the Spartan spoken—
And, as that dying beam was shed—my dream was broken.

NOTES TO BOOK THE FIRST.

(1) Stanza 42.—“Scythians with heel in front,” and “Ethiops dark and headless.”—The Abarimonides and Blemmyæ, will be recognized by readers acquainted with Pliny’s portraits of human monsters.

(2) Stanza 43.—“That breathing stone, &c.”—The author, it need scarcely be said, has never seen the Laocoon; but does not the imagination, on the mere receipt of testimony, often conceive a more passionate worship of that which is believed to be surpassingly beautiful, or perfect as an effort of human skill, than the judgment yields when directed by actual observation?

(3) Stanza 44.—“Sculptured temple in Hindoo cave.”—See Captain Seely’s enthusiastic description of “Keylas the Proud,” among the caverned temples of Elora.

(4) Stanza 44.—“Or where wild audience the Arab gives, &c.”—These and the remaining lines of the stanza form almost a literal embodiment of a picture that I remember to have met with in some volume of Eastern Travels, but I cannot tell where it is to be found. I have searched for the passage in Belzoni, Richardson, Rae, Wilson, &c. &c., in the British Museum library, since liberation, but cannot find it.

(5) Stanza 50.—Chow-Sin, Emperor of China, B. C. 1122.—His suicide is related to have resembled that of Sardanapalus.

(6) Stanza 52.—Zimri.—His story is narrated in the 16th chap. of the 1st Kings.

(7) Stanza 55.—Appius Claudius.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE SECOND.

I.

Lyre of my fatherland ! anew, to wake
Thy solemn shell, I come,—with trembling hand,—
Feeling my rudeness doth harsh discord make
With strings great minstrels all divinely spanned.
How shall a thrall essay to join your band,—
Ye freeborn spirits whose bold music fired
My freeborn sires to draw the glittering brand
For home and England,—or, in arms attired,
To awe their lion kings who to sole power aspired ?

II.

How shall a thrall, from humble labour sprung,
Successful, strike the lyre in scornful age,
When full-voiced bards have each neglected sung,
And loftiest rhyme is deemed a worthless page
By crowds that bow in Mammon-vassalage ?
Gray Prudence saith the world will disregard
My harping rude,—or term it sacrilege
That captive leveller hath rashly dared
To touch the sacred function of the tuneful bard.

III.

Ah ! when hath joined the servile world to say
Truth's song was fitly-chosen, fitly-timed ?—
The bard fit songster for a lofty lay,—
Or, that he worthily for bays had climbed ?
Great spirits ! who, from mortal clay sublimed,
Securely wear your immortality,—
By impulse incontrollable ye hymned
Soul-worship of the Beautiful,—the Free,
By freeborn strains, aroused to spurn at Tyranny !

IV.

Thou wert no beggar for permissive grace,—
Illustrious sire,—so blythely debonair,—
Who did'st from Monckery's mis-shapen face
The mask of purity, indignant tear,
And its deep-grained licentiousness lay bare,—
What time our simple fathers thou didst sing
On merry journey bent to patter prayer
At Martyr-shrine,—where bowed the priest-scourged king—
That saint with tameless English heart low homaging !

V.

And if thou sought'st thou didst no favour gain
Worthy to be esteemed a guerdon meet
For one who did in such instructive strain
As thine, great chief of Allegory ! greet
A queenly ear, with rhyme of knightly feat
And dark enchantment,—weaving moral pure
So deftly with harmonious numbers sweet
That, while thou didst the outward sense allure,
Thou fedd'st the mind and heart with Virtue's nouriture.

VI.

O matchless Archimage of nature, whom
I name with awe,—when thou aloft didst hold
Thy living ‘mirror’ to strike mortals dumb
With vision of its wonders manifold,—
To render uglier still the ugly mould
Of baneful vice,—and gibbet to mankind
Their general villainy,—didst thou, for gold,
Or great ones’ smiles, forbear to tell thy Mind,—
Or shape thy glass like one to their foul vices blind?

VII.

Or thou, immortal Childe, with him that saw
Islam’s Revolt, in rapt prophetic trance,—
Did fear of harsh reception overawe
Your fervid souls from fervid utterance
Of Freedom’s fearless shout?—your scathing glance
On priestly rottenness, did ye tame down
To censure soft that might find sufferance?
Knowing your cold award would be the frown [known.
Of custom, priestcraft, power,—ye made your stern thoughts

VIII.

And what if all were helot-thoughted things
Old Hellene bards to meet by sacred fount
Would frown,—save thee, to whom my spirit clings
With worship true,—it were enough to count
Thy life of toil example paramount
To coward precept. ‘Evil days’ were thine,
And ‘evil tongues’ and ‘dangers’,—yet confront
The storm thou didst with courage all divine,
And reared thy stately fabric ‘spite of cloud malign!

IX.

Bard of the mighty harp,—whose golden chords,
 Strung by th' Eternal; no befitting theme
 Found among mortals and their low records,—
 But pealed high anthems to the throne supreme,—
 Or, thundering echoed where the lurid gleam
 Of Erebus revealed the primal fall!—
 Since thou o'er ' darkness' lone triumph'd—I'll deem
 This grated cell no dungeon of a thrall,—
 But banquet-chamber where the Mind holds festival !

X.

Great minstrel, let the night entomb the day,—
 Let bolts and bars, in mockery, last till doom,—
 So that heaven-robed, thou walk'st with me,—thy lay
 Shall dissipate all thought of prison-gloom.
 Transcendent spirit,—in this narrow room
 Oft tenanted by woe-worn, bruted child
 Of man, crushed from his cradle to the tomb
 By tyrants,—how hast thou my nights beguiled!—
 ' Smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiled' ! (1)

XI.

I joy that my young heart a covenant made
 To take thee for its guide in patriot deed,—
 If Life's eventful roll should shew arrayed
 The brethren of my fatherland agreed
 To claim their ancient birthright, and be freed.—
 O how the lesson of thy deathless toil,—
 While my soul homaged thee,—in me did feed
 The flame of freedom!—Shall the sacred oil
 Not keep it quenchless till the grave its foemen foil ?

XII.

Be thou enthroned,—bright patriot,—tuneful seer, —
Not on a regal seat that thou wouldst scorn
As loftily as e'er thou scornedst here
The thrones of kings, or baubles by them worn ;
But, be thy name on England's bosom borne
In pride,—while all her sons thy lineage boast !—
Thy awful brow is shaded !—Dost thou mourn
And bode thy darling commonweal is lost ?—
Nay !—but we'll win her back, by Labour's gathered host !

XIII.

She shall return, with face more heavenly fair,
And graced with limbs of fittier symmetry !—
Aye,—*shall* return !—for we thy kindred are :—
We'll win thy ' mountain nymph, sweet Liberty ' !—
Thou, and the glorious phalanx of the free,—
Hampden, and Pym, and Elliott, Selden, Vane,
Marvell, and martyred Sydney,—what were ye ?—
Our elder brethren !—and the kingly chain
Ye loosed—we'll break !—ye have not toiled and bled, in vain !

XIV.

Honour—all honour to thee, patriot bard !—
With whom I took sweet counsel in my youth :
I joy, that though my lowly lot was hard,
My spirit, raised by thine, forgot its ruth,
And, smiling, dared the dint of Want's fell tooth :
I joy, that all enamoured of thy song,—
While simpletons esteemed my ways uncouth,—
I wandered, by day's dawn, the woods among,
Or did, with midnight lamp, my grateful task prolong,

XV.

Poet of Paradise,—whose glory illumed
My path of youthful penury, till grew
The desert to a garden, and Life bloomed
With hope and joy, 'midst suffering,—honour due
I cannot render thee ;—but reverence true
This heart shall give thee, till it reach the verge
Where human splendours lose their lustrous hue ;
And, when, in death, my mortal joys all merge—
Thy grand and gorgeous music, Milton,—be my dirge !—

XVI.

Long had the night o'erveiled the summer sky,
And, through the grated casement of my lair,—
Was it some guardian spirit's wakeful eye
The captive keeping ?—one mild, silver star,
Benignant, beamed. Meanwhile, of angel war,
Fierce waged in heaven against the Eternal king,—
Of great Messiah, in his cherub car,
Routing the foe,—I heard the minstrel sing,—
And seemed to hear high heaven with clash of conflict ring !

XVII.

Then, in extatic whispers, of the love
And joy, and peace, and harmony, that reigns
Unceasing, 'mid the radiant choir above,
Now war is o'er,—he sang : anon, in strains
Sonorous chaunted how, on burning plains,
Rallied the fallen warriors' myriad host,
And hurled defiance, 'spite of fiery pains
And torments, at the Conqueror,—their vain boast
Of strength original maintaining—although lost !

XVIII.

The mighty stature, and still mightier pride
And energy of him who 'seemed alone
'Th' antagonist of heaven'—in gloom descried
Breasting the flaming waves, or, on the throne
Of stately Pandemonium regal grown,
And confident in ruin,—the high seer,
Filled with his theme, in deep unearthly tone
Rehearsed,—while I, entranced with pleasing fear,
Imagined I beheld the proud archangel near!—

XIX.

Thus night sped on—until the golden lyre
And song magnificent brought sense of rest,
As late they woke the spirit's sleepless fire :—
So breathe, conjunctive, at Her high behest,
Nature's great servitors, to make Man blest—
Maugre his foes!—the Muse and Phantasy,
Hope, Music, Sleep :—until into his nest—
Straw on an iron slab—he sinks with glee—
Ev'n where the lordlings trow he pines in misery !

XX.

Nor did my minstrel guest upon me look
Farewell—until the soul her mystic flight,—
Leaving the flesh to slumber,—once more took :—
When, o'er Death's sea, by supernatural might
Upborne, we seemed to speed,—and then to alight
Together on that 'boundless continent
'Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night,
'Starless exposed' (²)—where wandered souls that rent
Themselves, unbidden, from their earthly tenement.

XXI.

Familiar seemed that drear and gloomy land
Unto the stately Shade with whom I trod
The swamp and rock o'er which the ghastly band
Essayed their march. But, now, as if some god
Potential had transfixed them by his nod,
The chasms forgot to yawn,—the rocks to roll
And threaten,—warlike meteors to forbode,—
And spectres ceased their gibings fierce and foul :
Horror was hushed ; and, patient, owned the bard's control !

XXII.

Swiftly we threaded through the caverned aisle
Of wondrous masonry ; and, forthwith, passed
Thorough the vault that seemed sepulchral pile
Scooped from primeval rock. Then with light haste
Upborne again,—as if on gentle blast
Pillowed,—or winged away by flying steed
Invisible,—we neared a mountain vast,
Where toiled a troop thinking its height would lead
Up to some happier clime from pains of penance freed.

XXIII.

Aloft we floated, passing crowd on crowd,—
Their guises varied as the flowers a-field,—
While with all nameless hues their features glowed,—
Betokening them self-exiles, unannealed,
From every mortal clime. Still up we wheeled,—
Our flight,—reaching no summit,—countless souls
Hard toiling upwards being still revealed,—
As if the discontented in huge shoals
Had hither 'scaped from Earth's old hated prison walls !

XXIV.

Our flying travel ended where a grove
Grew on the mount. 'Midst, sat a form which seemed
With raised right hand to mock the pomp of Jove
Hurling his lightnings. Asking, as I dreamed,
Who this might be—'twas 'he who to be deemed
'A god leapt fondly into Etna flames—
'Empedocles' (³)—the bard replied ;—while gleamed
From the throned figure looks of one who aims
Unto some high pretension to assert his claims.

XXV.

Methought, on this aspiring form I gazed
Until a youth, who downcast looked, and coy,
Came near ; when wond'ring that he never raised
His eyes, I asked what thoughts him might employ :
The minstrel said, 'twas 'he who to enjoy
'Plato's Elysium leapt into the sea—
'Cleombrotus' (⁴)—and, the fanatic boy
Thus briefly named, my minstrel guide from me
Departed. I, to follow felt I was not free.

XXVI.

Perplex'd, I seemed awhile, to look around,
And wistfully to think of mother Earth ;
But soon all thought and consciousness were bound
Unto that mountain region : I felt dearth
Of earthly sense, as heretofore,—but birth
Of intellection ;—for the spirits twain,—
Of Hellas sprung,—seemed now, in words of worth,—
Though without mortal sound,—of their soul's stain,
And essences of things to speak in fervid strain.—

XXVII.

Sage Agrigentine,—shall we never leave
Our earth-born weaknesses ?—the youth began :
Ages of thought, since Hades did receive
Our spirits, have elapsed, by mortal span,—
Still, from the great disciplinarian
Stern truth, we slowly learn ! A juggler's dupe
Thou art, ev'n now—thyself the charlatan !
Nay !—like an intellectual eagle, stoop
Upon thy quarry,—Self-Deceit,—with conquering swoop !

XXVIII.

Vainly, thou know'st thou wilt seek worshippers
Of thy proud foolery, here. Before thee fall
No votaries ; and thy own spirit stirs,
In vain, her sovereignty to re-enthral
By harbouring old thoughts fantastical :
None will thy godship own ! Thy rock descend,—
Laying stale follies by,—and let us call
Forth from the mind the vigorous powers that rend
Fate's curtain,—and our ken beyond these shades extend !——

XXIX.

The younger Hellene ceased ; and, while he spake,
The elder changed, like one who having quaffed
The madd'ning cup, up from his couch doth wake,
And—told by crowds that old Lyœan craft
Beguiled him, till he skipt, and mouthed, and laught,
As one moon-struck,—now, ebriate with rage,
Dashes to earth the foul venenose draught :—
So changed, from pride to ire, the thought-smit sage—
As if the soul now spurned her self-wrought vassalage.

XXX.

Descending his imaginary throne
With haste,—upon the rugged granite peak
He seemed to have laid his fancied godhead down ;
For, like to glow that crimsons mortal cheek,
A glow of shame came o'er the lofty Greek,
When, 'midst the grove, upon the mountain's sward
He stood,—and, couched in phrase antique,
Poured forth his inmost thoughts. A rapt regard
Rendered the youth while thus discoursed the ancient bard :⁽⁵⁾—

XXXI.

Cleombrotus, thou humblest me ; yet I
Thy debtor am : fraternal chastisement
Our spirits need, even here—O mystery
Inexplicable ! Vainly, on earth outwent
The mind on high discovery,—prescient
Herself esteeming of her after state ;
For, wide diversity this banishment
Displays of pain,—and all unlike our state
To what we did in mortal life prognosticate.

XXXII.

Thou find'st not here deep ecstasy absorb
With ravishment perpetual the soul ;—
Although Elysian dreams yon dreaming orb
Enticed thee to forsake, and flee to goal
Eternal. Neither do fierce fires control
Our thought with mystic torture,—as they feign
On earth, who now affright, and then cajole
Poor trampled earthworms—picturing joy or pain
Ghostly, until the mind subserves the body's chain.

XXXIII.

Here, as on earth, we feel our woe or joy
Is of and from ourselves : the yearning mind
Her own beatitude, and its alloy,
Creates, though suffering ever intertwined,
She proves, with error. Fool—I am, and blind—
Amidst my fancied wisdom !—What impels
The soul to err ? If in the right she find
Her happiness concentrated,—why rebels
The will against the judgment, till it foams and swells.

XXXIV.

A tempest,—aided by the raging blast
Of passion,—and the yielding soul is whirled
Helplessly into guilt's black gulf, or cast
On death's sharp breakers ? What hath hither hurled
Thy bark and mine ? Our senses' sails upfurl'd
We did esteem, by sage Philosophy,—
Yet was our vessel caught where fiercest curled
The furious billows,—and poor shipwrecks we
Were left—even while we boasted our dexterity !

XXXV.

Thou, whilst aspiring after fuller bliss
Than earth affords, wert maddened with desire
To realize some pure hypostasis
Platonic dreamers fable from their sire.
The Academician : I, consuming fire
Felt daily in my veins to see my race
Emerge from out the foul defiling mire
Of animal enjoyments that debase
Their nature, and well-nigh its lineaments efface.

XXXVI.

I burned to see my species proudly count
Themselves for more than brutes ; and toiled to draw
Them on to drink at Virtue's living fount,—
Whence purest pleasures flow. Alas ! I saw
Old Vice had them besotted till some awe,—
Some tinge of mystery,—must be allied
With moral lessons,—or, a futile law
My scholars would esteem them. Not in pride
To Etna's yawning gulph the Agrigentine hied :—

XXXVII.

I loved my kind ; and, eager to exalt
Them into gods, to be esteemed a god
I coveted : thinking none would revolt
From godlike virtue when the awful nod
Divine affirmed its precepts. Thus, to fraud
Strong zeal for virtue led me ! Canst thou blame
My course ? I tell thee, thirst for human laud
Impelled me not : 'twas my sole-thoughted aim
To render Man,—my brother,—worthy his high name !—

XXXVIII.

So spake Empedocles ; and him the youth
Thus answered :—Mystery, that ever grows
More complex as we, ardent, seek for truth,
Doth still encompass us ! Thy words disclose
A tide of thoughts ; and o'er my spirit flows
Wave after wave,—bearing me, nerveless, from
My fancied height : as when, by acheful throes,—
Self-castaway,—the shelving rock I clomb,—
The sea asserted o'er my limbs its masterdom.

XXXIX.

My chiefest marvel is that Wisdom's son,—
Thyself,—should, after ages have gone o'er
His being, and Life's poor grovelling race is run,
Still feel anxieties which earth's old shore
Convert to hell. Empedocles,—no more
Mix palliation with confession,—guise
Of fraud with truth ! If, in thy heart's deep core,
Thou hadst not erred,—why, by the grand assize
Of the soul's Judge,—dost thou in Hades agonize ?

XL.

No longer from thy judgment seek to hide
The truth indisputable—that thy heart
Was moved,—like every human heart,—by pride—
That subtle poison which with fatal smart,
Man's spirit penetrates, and doth impart
Its hateful tinct even to his pearliest deeds.
Whence rise the spectrous forms that flit athwart
Thy mental vision here ? Thy thought—why breeds
It still Pride's haughty plant,—unless from earth-sown seeds ?

XLI.

I question not the truth of thy deep love
For virtue,—for man's happiness thy zeal. (6)
Empedocles,—thou knowest my soul hath clove
To thine for ages, in these shades : we feel
Our heart congenial while we reveal
Its spiritual throbbings. Not in hate
Or mockery do I once again appeal
Unto thy nobler thought : though sad our state,
Let us from self-deceit the soul emancipate !

XLII.

He ceased ; and thus the Agrigentine sage
Replied :—Cleombrotus,—in me, again,
Thou call'st forth gratitude :—self-cozenage,
How low, how mean, how imbecile and vain !
Yet, humbled, I discern its hateful stain
Within my essence, still : Would thou hadst torn
My last disguise away,—and bruised the reign
Of my deceits, eternally !—Upborne
Above these mists, then would the soul find her blest bourne !

XLIII.

And why cannot the soul her strength exert
Even now ? Age after age this servitude
To frailty we endure,—and, all inert,
Droop o'er our woe, or, passive, mourn ! Endu'd
With power our being is : this torpitude
Let us shake off ! We loathe the stain we see
Still cleaving to us : let the will denude
The soul of frailty ! Now her sovereignty
This essence wields ! we'll scale this Mount of Vanity !——

XLIV.

With wild fanatic light his visage glowed ;
And kindred fire began, forthwith, to gleam
In the youth's eyes :—With mystic might endowed
I feel we are !—he cried :—with might supreme !
The soul *shall* sun herself amid the beam
Extatic, where Elysian flowers bloom
In fields of ceaseless verdure,—and where stream
The waters of rejuvenescence !—Gloom
Shall cease !—these shades are not the soul's perpetual doom !—

XLV.

Now, let us mount !—haste, haste, Empedocles !
My brother, haste !—Our spirits' law delay
Brooks not : let us the favouring current seize
That now the soul bears onward !—

Swift away,

I saw them, as I dreamed, sanguine and gay
Of heart as children,—join the toiling crew
Of motley shapes and guises that, for aye,
Clomb up to gain some peak—winning no view
They sought—but seeming, still, their struggle to renew.

XLVI.

And, as I dreamed, methought, the motley mob
Babbled of names that every earthly clime
Have filled with strife until the feverous throb
Issued in darkest, deadliest deeds of crime—
Each deed still hallowed by the things of slime—
The vermin priests. Amid the hubbub wild
'Cross,'—'crescent',—'hell'—and 'heaven' made strange chime
With 'Tartarus'—'Elysium'; and some smiled,
While others gnashed their teeth :—but all still upward toiled.

XLVII.

My spirit, with a vague, wild ardour rapt,
Seemed speedily to mingle with this host.
And, as I gazed, sleek, supple forms that aped
Deep sanctity, sighing, trudged on, and crossed
Themselves. Of sable hue, full many a ghost
Was there that called on Boodh, and Juggernaut,
Veeshnu, and Seera, and Kalee : these tossed
Their frantic forms, and writhed, and wildly smote
Upon their breasts—seeming with extasy distraught.

XLVIII.

And turbann'd shapes were there that proudly frowned
On all around them, and 'Allah akbar !'
Proclaimed : whereat 'Christ shield us from Mahound !'
A band exclaimed that signs of antique war
Displayed,—their zeal and guise alike bizarre,—
Shirted in steel and visored,—while loud rung
The spiritual air with holy jar
Of chivalrous chartel they fiercely flung
At their grim Paynim foemen, with obstrep'rous tongue.

XLIX.

Nor shrunk from challenge to renew earth's strife
The scowling Moslems,—but with bitter jeer
And scoff retorted. Soon the tumult rife
And fiery grew ; the lank Jew hurled his sneer
Alike at knightly pilgrim and austere
Follower of Islam,—Budhist and Bramin joined,—
And mingling curse of Turk, Jew, bonze, fakir,
Templar, monk, palmer, santon, hermit—coined
A cursing tempest from their cursing tongues combined.

L.

Anon, came on a crew that swift outsped,
And soon outdinned with more relentless curse,
This bitter cursing crowd. High overhead
The bannered Lamb and Dove did misrehearse
The spite with which their vot'ries sought to force
Each other to distraction. Paradox
And Mystery hurling with invective coarse,
These fight along,—and each his brother mocks
With taunt of 'schism !'—frowning with haught brow orthodox.

LI.

Anathemas and hells eternal waged
They next against each other,—losing sense
Of their strange afterstate,—so madly raged
Each bigot at his fellow's difference
Of madness. Memory of their woes intense
Returning, each made halt and turned to scorn
His neighbour's cowardice, with spite prepenze,
For blighted self-destroyer that must mourn
In endless pain, with torturous hope of end still torn.—

LII.

And now gave o'er their lunatic pursuit
The Graian sage and youth I first perceived
Upon the mount. Amid the mad dispute
Of million zealots they seemed each bereaved
Of self-possession,—till, anon they cleaved
A way from out the crowd, and sat them down,
Wearied and strife-worn, while their spirits grieved
With more than mortal agony :—all flown
Their dreams,—and their wild hopes brought back to Hades' zone!

LIII.

Long space, and gloomy, of existence past,—
In which, with silent grief, the spirits twain
Seemed overwhelmed,—and each enthusiast
His face averted from his brother,—fain
To bide his shame, and struggling to sustain
His own peculiar woe. At length outburst
Cleombrotus, unable to restrain
His swelling sorrow :—Evermore accurst—
He cried,—be memory of him who kindled thirst

LIV.

Within me for some vaguely' imagined good,
Unproven by the soul,—and whether ill
Or good unknown ;—since oft false likelihood
Befools the mind,—oft she impels the will
To grasp a hemlock where she thought to fill
Her embrace with the rose. My mortal state
Why did I scorn ? Not seldom, sweetest thrill
Of pleasure follows pain : joys mitigate
Worst woe : Men share no irremediable fate :

LV.

Sorrow, on earth, hath uses : nutritive
Of joy griefs often prove ; and power to find
Pleasures unfound before pains, friendly, give.
O state beyond compare ! and for the mind
And body framed benignly !—weak and blind
And thoughtless was my wish for unmixed joy
Perpetual,—since alternate pain designed
Satiety of pleasure to destroy
I now discern. Could ceaseless pleasure fail to cloy ?

LVI.

Alas ! in vain I reason !—vainly charge
My tortured spirit with her last foul leap—
Her darkest deepest stain ! While on the marge
Of jeopardy this lessening might keep
The soul from error ; but when once the steep
She clears, sage counsels no deliverance bring.—
Yet, why do I permit despair to sweep
Away all hope ? Unto the weakest thing,
For help, the seaman 'midst the strife of death will cling :

LVII.

To weeds—to quicksands—to the cresting foam
 Of the wild waves themselves !—And shall she sink,—
 The deathless spirit,—in self-exiled home,—
 Where yet remains her boundless power to think ?
 O luxury ineffable,—since link
 To link the spiritual Cyclops swift
 And strong may forge,—till to the very brink
 Of space her tether reach !—this matchless gift
 Is still her portion: shall she not of it make thrift ?

LVIII.

Empedocles,—my brother,—once more tell
 To me thy spirit's woes or joys: once more
 Let us together struggle to expel
 Our sense of pain,—and the wide realm explore
 Of deepest cogitation :—that vast shore
 We can, unfettered, visit, and still glean
 Its metaphysic splendours, as of yore :—
 Let us our travel to the fair demesne
 Of Mind essay,—that land of truest evergreen !——

LIX.

Cleombrotus,—my spirit doth respond
 To thine, with joy !—replied Empedocles :
 The soul her winged steed, caparison'd
 For venturous travel, mounts—and on the breeze
 Discursive pants to ride : from far she sees
 Her promised conquests ;—for thou well hast told,
 And truly, intellective pleasures please
 When other joys are joyless.—But, behold !
 Where comes to share our converse the wise Indian old :—

LX.

He whom Emathian Philip's son beheld
 Amazed,—while pealing trumpets cleaved the sky,
 And warrior hosts the wondering tumult swelled,—
 Ride, on his goaded steed, undauntedly,
 Into the funeral flame,—scorning to die
 By nature's gradual law ! Hail, Calanus ! (7) —
 The sage spake on—for, now, the Indian night
 Appeared ;—full timely comest thou with us
 To share, as often, erst, the descant emulous.

LXI.

The theme of mystery,—What being is,—
 Begin !—Whence Pain and Pleasure,—Hope, Despair ?—
 Why Truth in endless metamorphosis
 Doth shroud herself :—How Wisdom may declare
 Her precepts best ; and how she best may snare
 The vulgar crowd her lessons to observe,
 Thereby to elevate and bless—
 Forbear !—
 The Indian cried, with intellectual nerve
 Throned in his glance ;—Blindly thou dost from wisdom swerve !

LXII.

Empedocles, in sooth I say thou err'st,
 As when on earth. Yet, thy clay trammels thou,
 By long sojourn in Hades, shouldst have burst.
 Falsehood and ignorance will ever bow
 The human soul ; and urge it, base and low,
 To grovel in the dust. Falsehood and sooth
 Breed no amalgam. Flame from flood shall flow,—
 The summer's sun shed drops congealed,—and youth
 Be sire unto Old Age,—ere Lies shall nurture Truth !

LXIII.

O Greek, called wise, think how old earth hath mourned
And bled through ages, by the mixture foul
Of fraud with truth ! Would that thy heart suborned
Had never been by pride, a false controul
To forge for Virtue o'er the human soul !
How would the universal race of man
Have joined thy lofty labour to extol,—
Thy high emprise of goodness,—if the ban
Of evil mystery had not obscured thy plan !

LXIV.

I speak not here to wound thee ;—but I joy
That Vulcan's fabled forge cast out, in scorn,
Thy sandals' brazen soles, for base alloy, (°)—
And thus the flimsy veil in twain was torn
That hid thy apish godhead. Hadst thou worn
The false divinity thou sought'st, thy shrine
Had only swelled the slavish burthen borne
By sottish man of priestly craft malign :—
Th' enwoven fraud had frustrated thy scheme benign !——

LXV.

Eager response unto the Indian gave
The Agrigentine bard :—If not by aid
Of harmless fraud,—he said,—how could'st thou save
The sons of degradation that have strayed
In Folly's paths until the comely maid,
Fair Virtue, seems to them uncomeliness
Itself ?—

Call not fraud—harmless !—said the Shade
With sable visage :—Shadow bodiless
Of Fraud would curse a world with its flagitiousness :

LXVI.

Tinct, grain of falsehood would a cureless plague,—
A leprosy o' th' heart,—in mankind breed !
Empedocles,—thy wisdom still is vague,
Miscalculating, blind ;—and still succeed
'To thee, on earth, they who mankind mislead,—
Without thy real philanthropy engrafted
Within their hearts,—but mixing with their greed
For praise or gold, a larger share of craft :—
How long and loud the fablers at the easy world have laughed !

LXVII.

And still sleek fablers thrive ;—whilst thou to flame
Gav'st thy frail life, and for thyself hast won—
What ?—Folly's laurels, and a madman's fame !—
The time will come, O Hellene ! when the sun
Shall look upon a world no more o'errun
With slaves to sensualism ;—when haggard Spite,
And frowning Pride, and Envy pale shall shun
'Truth's glorious beams, and Love's celestial light—
They twain that shall be one, by hymeneals bright !

LXVIII.

Glad Earth shall wed them : to the nuptial-feast,—
The banquet sempiternal,—new-born Faith
Shall call the nations : fairest Peace, sweet Rest,
And holy Joy, shall minister with breath
Ambrosial at the bridal : demon wrath
Against their brethren, cruelty through lure
Of gold, and lust to wear the blood-stained wreath,—
The strong shall loathe : the weak shall wear, secure,
Their stronger brethren's love—that heaven-wrought armature !

LXIX.

How blest that nuptial reign !—The strong shall seek
Their strength to nurture, hourly, with the dews
Of Pity, and Mercy,—visiting, with meek
Yet fervid zeal,—Pain's couch, and Want's purlieus,—
Creating health for sickness,—hopeful views
Of life for dark despondence,—breaking bread
To weeping orphans,—and the withered thews
Of age cheering with raiment,—till, outspread
In smiles, Earth is one mother's hearth where brethren tread !

LXX.

The time will come !—but, ere that bridal-day
Dawn on our ancient home, Knowledge must win,
By toilsome steps and slow, her widening way :—
Knowledge,—the new-born world's great heroine—
That shall be—when, of knight and paladin,
Tartar and Mameluke, legion and cohort
And phalanx, fame hath fled ;—when War's rude din
Is hushed ;—and ' Glory ' ravening king's fell sport,
Is chronicled with tales of murderous report.

LXXI.

O Greek, hadst thou a lowly pioneer
Aspired to be of Knowledge, and disdained
'To be esteemed, by Greeks, a fit compeer
Of myriad mongrel gods,—mankind had gained
By thee, perchance, a gift worth thanks unfeigned ;
And lasting honours to thy memory
Exultant lands had rendered,—disenchained
From ignorance, and craft, and tyranny :—
Yet, it will come—that trump of world-spread jubilee !—

LXII.

The time will come!—Young Knowledge on her march
Already speeds!—her march of suffering toil,
And peaceful hardihood,—of patient search
And tireless zeal: forth from his snaky coil
Old Superstition springs,—and Power his foil
Of sword and chain opposeth to her steps—
But all in vain!—she counts them for a spoil!—
And conquering and to conquer, forth she sweeps
O'er alp, and vale, and strand,—and bounds across the deeps!

LXXIII.

Now beams on Thule's shore her genial torch—
Yea, there her central temple proudly stands:—
And lo! who greets her at the stately porch—
An awful-fronted sage, from whom her hands
Receives an ensign which on high expands
Amid the breeze: that peerless gonfalon
Monarchs and Priests behold, and think their sands
Are numbered,—for aghast, they read upon
Its scroll 'Knowledge is Power!'—They fear their craft undone!

LXXIV.

They quake—they bow—and soon shall disappear
Their twin theurgies—for the nations wake!
Knowledge, the great Enfranchiser, is near!
Yet, though their bonds the wide world's helots break,
They seek not in their tyrants' blood to slake
A thirst for vengeance: Knowledge desolates
No mother's hearth—no brother's home: they take
Revenge in mercy, whom she' emancipates:
His carrion maw, tracking her steps, no vulture sates:

LXXV.

The dogs of carnage prowl not where she treads :—
Beneath her steps the sterile desert smiles ;
And o'er the wintry waste its perfume sheds
The vernal rose : along the forest aisles
Earth's seraphim awake :—her breath beguiles
Old Nature's self ! I see their rays appear—
The beauteous bridal pair !—the distant isles
Begin to shout that Truth and Love are near—
For Knowledge wins her way—their radiant harbinger !—

LXXVI.

So spake the Indian sage, and stood enrapt
In ecstacy prophetic,—as, of old,
The Pythoness afflate who, struggling, shaped
To mortal sounds what the Immortal told.
Silence applausive, that with mystic mould
Of fleshless forms consorts, followed. His trance
Of admiration first the youth controlled :—
I burn with wish,—he said,—that Fate or Chance
Had granted us of clay a later heritage :

LXXVII.

What raptures then had been our portion ! Now
We wrestle with our lot in hope : for yet
Hope unto us remains ; and on thy brow,
O Calanus, methinks, are brightly met
Rays of a hope for Hades. Shall thy debt
And ours to anger'd Providence be purged
By ages of endurance, here,—beset
With strange alternate woes ?—for either urged
By hope we strive,—or, in despair all strife is merged ,

LXXVIII.

In wretchedness of dull, grave-cold despair :—
 Say, sable spirit,—what thou know'st of rest
 That shall be ours !—

With look of anxious care,

He ceased, impatient for reply. Unblest,
 Humbled, regretful, thought and speech confest
 Empedocles, who,—ere the Indian sage
 Made answer,—also briefly urged his quest :—
 Some glimpse of joy,—he said,—my thoughts presage :
 This shall not be the soul's eternal heritage :

LXXIX.

The spirit shall escape her prison-house :—
 But thou, O Sage,—in whom experience—
 Hath wrought deep knowledge,—who with luminous
 Perceptions art endowed, and opulence
 Of reasoning power, like to the prescience
 Of gods,—tell forth what hope of blissful end
 To these our changeeful woes, or what suspense
 Of agony, thou dost foreknow. Could we amend
 The past, my soul should truth no more with foul fraud blend :

LXXX.

Bright truth with grovelling fraud :—too late I see
 Wide wanderings with my fancied rectitude
 Enmixt. But why this Mount of Vanity,—
 So called by souls that have, for aye, renewed
 Their strife to win its peak,—still unsubdued
 Their sanguine zeal, though fruitless,—why assign
 The gods our portion here ? Disquietude
 Of myriad forms hath Hades,—but divine,—

If that thou canst,—why hold we this abhorr'd confine ?

LXXXI.

What Power appoints to us, with minds at large,
This mountain-prison?—Why, in this duress,
Deemed we, but now, our spirits on the marge,
Of extasy's eternal boundlessness,—
And then, again, surged, wrecked, and shelterless,
On agony's shore, ourselves imagined? Though
Mysterious agencies on us impress
Their purposes,—thou, Calanus, mayst know
What these, the wondering soul's perplexities, foreshow.—

LXXXII.

Perplexed I am for answer,—in my dream
The Indian seemed to say :—Here banishment
From earth is self-inflicted ; and I deem
Some mystic law consociates spirits pent
In this strange realm of penance: they who rent
Themselves from earth, impelled by painful force
Of ill-requited passion, live unblent
With spirits who through torturous remorse
Fled hither to embrace the self-destroyer's curse.

LXXXIII.

And they whom slights and treacheries have pierced
With thousand arrows ;—or, whom children's hate
Hath heart-galled ;—or, whose actions misrehearsed,
The pitiless world hath phrensied ; or, whom Fate
Or circumstance hath failed to elevate
Above their fellows,—till by their own hand
They severed life's frail bonds,—a various state
Hold here. From these the Poet and the Patriot band,
Self-exiles, dwell apart, in this mysterious land.

LXXXIV.

Nor seems it purposeless that we who rest
 Ourselves of earth's mixt joys through thirst to drink
 Of extasy unmixt, should thus be left
 At large, as heretofore, to dream and think ;—
 And, while imagining we reach the brink
 Of purest joy, should feel ourselves still tossed
 On hope's conflicting wave,—then feebly sink
 Desponding. If, upon this mystic coast,
 Each wandering soul with dreams and visions be engrossed

LXXXV.

Analagous to dreams and visions which
 In mortal life engrossed her, 'midst the crowd
 Of stern realities,—if toys bewitch
 Her here, as erst on earth,—and mists enshroud
 Her vision till all being with a cloud
 Is wrapt,—and doubt asks whether she exists
 Or not,—why, let our struggling will be bowed !
 It is our spirits' law,—and, as Fate lists
 We live : in vain this law our rebel will resists.

LXXXVI.

Shall we live thus for ever,—or hath hope
 Foundation firm for joys—pure joys to come ?—
 Perplexed I answer : We but guess and grope
 For this the jewel of our search : unwomb
 Herself Truth may :—but, in the heart of gloom
 She still hides this her gem of gems : the mind
 Oft asks how gods their progeny can doom
 To endless, hopeless woe :—but what, if blind
 Necessity grasps all !—Who shall her grasp unbind ?

LXXXVII.

Oft speak we of deep sympathies enwove
In flesh-freed Essences with men on earth,—
Foretelling that when Truth shall wed with Love
'Mong mortals, spirits in Hades shall, thenceforth,
Experience wondrous change :—the soul new birth
Shall have of wisdom,—false distinctions cease,—
Or they have highest honour who in worth
Of virtue most excel,—penance to peace
And spir'tual rest be changed,—and ever know increase !

LXXXVIII.

With ye, not seldom, Hellenes sage : I share
These sanguine thoughts ;—but souls of Kings ask whence
Derive we our bright hope. Summons I bear
Unto our mountain realm—that high souls hence
Betake them where in pictured affluence
Of power Monarchs hold thrones, when lapse of pain
To them, with us, Nature's behests dispense.
Since Kings yield parley, think ye that in vain
Truth's devotees 'fore thrones shall themes of Truth maintain ?

LXXXIX.

Spirits, ye beam with thoughts that antedate
Triumph of Truth and Right ; and I partake
Your deep prophetic joy. What though dark hate
Bosoms of kings usurps ?—Love shall awake
In gentleness omnipotent, and take
Her native throne within their souls,—for they
Are human,—and all human souls shall break
Their vassalage to Wrong. Alas !—dismay
Of doubt begins, anew, to seek me for its prey !

XC.

Empedocles !—Cleombrotus !—our life
In Hades, as on earth, is mystery :
Our being is a contest and a strife
With its own essence : struggling to be free
We add unto our fetters : while we flee—
Or think we flee—from folly, we are more
Than ever fools ! The soul, a refugee
In Hades from Earth's woes, her woes deplore
In deeper woe may, endlessly ;—or with new power

XCI.

Endowed, may yet launch out her fragile bark
Adventurously, and find some sea of bliss,—
Some unknown flood of light,—and, far from dark
And dismal storms of doubt, emparadise
Herself—
Anon, from vague hypothesis
The Indian fell again to doubtings void,
Till like his speech, his form itself, I wis,
Grew dim ; and with its brother forms did glide
Into the womb of Nought :—the vision was destroyed.

NOTES TO BOOK THE SECOND.

(1) Stanza 10.—Comus.

(2) (3) and (4) Stanzas 20, 24, and 25.—Paradise Lost.

(5) Stanza 30.—“The ancient bard.”—The poetical performances of Empedocles (without mootiug the question of his identity with Empedocles the tragedian) must have been considerable.—Diogenes Laertius (editio Amsteldami: Hen. Wetstenii: page 529) records Aristotle’s testimony that the character of the Agrigentine philosopher’s poetry was ‘Homermal,’ and takes especial notice of a poem on Xerxes’ transit of the Hellespont, and an address or hymn to the Sun (in Apollinem proœmium.) Fabricius (Bibliotheca Græca: editio Hamburgi: vol 1, page 811) in the list of the works of Empedocles places three books of hexameter verse on Nature,—3000 hexameters on Lustrations, and 600 on Medicine. In the same volume (familiar to *all* readers in the British Museum library, on account of its nearness to the catalogue-stand) the ‘learned’ reader may peruse a specimen of this philosopher’s poetry,—being 168 lines of Greek, on the Spheres,—and may also acquaint himself with some stout reasons why Empedocles should be considered as the real author of the celebrated ‘Golden Verses of Pythagoras.’

(6) Stanza 41.—The highest testimonies to the philanthropy, humane exercise of his medical skill, liberality in the disposition of his wealth, and democratic spirit of Empedocles, are given by Laertius and others.—See Stanley’s or Enfield’s ‘History of Philosophy.’

(7) Stanza 60.—‘Calanus.’—The self-immolation of this Indian philosopher, in the presence of Alexander the Great, is described, with some variations of circumstance, by Arrian, Plutarch, and others.

(8) Stanza 64.—Diogenes Laertius gives authorities for his relation that the mode of Empedocles’ suicide was discovered by the casting up of his brazen sandals from the crater of Etna: other ancient authors discredit the entire narrative.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE THIRD.

I.

Hail, glorious Sun !—all hail the captive's friend !
Giver of purest joys, where Sorrow fain
Would enter and abide, and, traitorous, lend
Her power to aggravate the tyrant's chain :—
Great Exorcist, that bringest up the train
Of childhood's joyaunce, and youth's dazzling dreams
From the heart's sepulchre,—until, again,
I live in extasy, 'mid woods, and streams,
And golden flowers that laugh while kissed by thy bright beams.

II.

Aye,—once more,—mirrored in the silver Trent,
Thy noon-tide majesty I think I view
With boyish wonder ; or, till drowsed and spent
With eagerness, peer up the vaulted blue
With shaded eyes, watching the lark pursue
Her dizzy flight ;—then, on a fragrant bed
Of meadow sweets still sprent with morning dew,
Dream how the heavenly chambers overhead
With steps of grace and joy the holy angels tread.

III.

Of voices sweet, and harps with golden wires
Touched by the fingers of the seraph throng;
Of radiant vision which the cherub choirs
Witness, with jubilee of rapturous song,
And without weariness their joy prolong,—
I lie and dream,—till, with a start, I wake,
Thinking my mother's home is still among
Earth's children, and her yearning heart will ache,
If, for those angel joys, her smile I should forsake.—

IV.

O heart,—now cold in the devouring grave,
And torn, no more, by scorn and suffering,—
How fondly didst thou to thy darling cleave!
Although thy tyrants but a worthless thing
Esteemed him. Rankled, deep, oppression's sting
In thy recesses :—still, in hardihood
Of conscious right, stern challenge thou didst fling
Back at thy foemen and their hireling brood,—
And beat unto old age with free and youthful blood !

V.

Mother,—thy wrongs,—the common wrongs of all
To labour doomed by proud and selfish drones,
Enduringly have fixed the burning gall
Deep in my veins—aye in my very bones.
I hate ye,—things with surplices and crowns !—
Serpents that poison,—tigers that devour
Poor human kind,—and fill the earth with groans,
Through every clime ! God send ye were no more !—
Ye'd have a merry requiem, from shore to shore !

VI.

Taxes for king and priest a knave was wont
To filch from my poor widowed mother's toil ;
And while the prowling jackall held his hunt,
He batted on the offals of the spoil,—
And mocked the sufferers ! How my blood did boil
When lately I beheld a gilded stone
Raised to the memory of this vermin vile,
And pious charity ascribed thereon
To him who gray beneath the Poor's grim curse had grown !

VII.

I laid my aged mother near the dust
Of her oppressor ; but no gilded verse
Tells how she toiled to win her child a crust,
And, fasting, still toiled on : no rhymes rehearse
How tenderly she strove to be the nurse
Of truth and nobleness in her loved boy,
'Spite of his rags——

O Sun ! thou dost amerce

My withered heart, for the poor fleeting joy
With which thy beams began my sadness to destroy.

VIII.

Bright Gazer on the wilderness of woe
Called Earth,—dost thou in mockery smile
Above,—like all thou look'st upon below ?
I fondly hoped thou wouldst, a little while,
The captive of his cankerous care beguile—
But,—for one glimpse of childhood's cheerful bloom,—
Thou hast brought back upon my heart a pile
Of achings kindred to the dreary tomb ;
And mak'st me feel I hasten to that realm of gloom.

IX.

What—when my torturers have had their fill
Of vengeance—if I, once more, freely range,
Beneath thy radiance, over vale and hill,
Through tangled wood, by stream, and moated grange,
And festooned castle wall?—deep thoughts of change
And sadness will the flowers of childhood bring :
I shall be companied with voices strange
To childhood's rapture, and unskilled to sing
The merry song with which we made the welkin ring :

X.

Sorrow will follow song of matin merle
And vesper throstle where young joys I took :—
For, of the dead, where Lindsey's streamlets purl,
Remembrances are writ, in nature's book :—
The gentle violet may sweetly look
As heavenly blue as it was wont to glow :
But, like that darling floret by the brook,
'Twill breathe—' Forget-me-not ! '—and I shall bow
In grief, remembering that joyous hearts lie low.——

XI.

Thou gorgeous lamp to light man to the home
Appointed for all living !—though elate
With throb of liberty regained I roam
O'er paths to Life's glad morning consecrate,—
Will not thy flame foreshew that for me wait
The prison-portals of the grave,—and I but stay
At large on sufferance?—for, the writ of Fate
Will soon arrive, which not a breath's delay
Brooks, of their full surrender, from the forms of clay.

XII.

Oh! couldst thou bare that dark captivity
 From whence, released, none ever yet returned
 To tell its secrets,—how our dreams would flee!
 Was it to know Death's truths, in life, that yearned
 The hoary Kelt who on the cromlech burned
 His brother,—hymning thee, the sky-throned god?—
 For ages, Man thy huge gray shrines hath spurned,
 Mocking thy worship; but, like all who trod
 Earth then, in dreams, still dream the children of the clod!

XIII.

And thou, thyself, all glorious as thou art,
 Supernal Sun!—what art thou but a dream?—
 A splendid vanity,—a glittering part
 Of the vast aggregate of things that seem?
 How know I that with veritable beam
 Thou dost illume earth and her sister spheres?
 Or, whether they and thou,—mere fictions,—teem
 From Mind,—and thy great glory but appears—
 Not is—and will, with thy beholders, fade with years?

XIV.

Hath Mind, more truly, substance, than than thou,
 Great Sun?—

Oh! how poor human thought doth mock
 Itself! *I think I see: I think I know!*
 What further?—Nought—to worms! Although ye knock
 At Truth's dark barriers,—they will bear the shock
 Till doomsday—if it ever come! If sleep
 Eternal comes, instead,—then, at a stroke,
 Away, it will hope, faith, and doubting sweep:—
 And, if we cease to be;—why,—we shall cease to weep.

XV.

Alas !—the soul doth seek to gather balm,
In vain, from barrenness : alternative
So frigid, blank, and bare, affords no calm
To him whose heart desires for aye to live,—
And yet doth palpitate, despond, misgive,—
More than it hopes.—

Resplendent light ! now wanes
Thy beam ;—yet, who the morrow shall survive
To see, shall thee behold gilding the plains,
And hear thy gladdened birds rechant their joyous strains :

XVI.

And thus, my brother-worms, in days of eld,
Looked on thy resurrection, and believed
That since thy disentanglement they beheld
Each morn,—thou hadst a symbol for them weaved
Of glorious life to follow death :—reprieved
From fear of what I fear,—they danced, they sung,
And on the mountains where so late they grieved,
And wailed their dead, gay trophies to thee hung,
And shouted thy high praises till the hills and vallies rung :

XVII.

Baal,—whose mighty tabernacles rose,—
Roofed by the sky,—from Babel to Stonehenge ;—
Whose Beltein fire her mountain child still shews
On Caledonia's hills,—'spite of all change :—
From worship of whose flame no taunts estrange
'The persecuted Guebre or Parsee :
Osiris,—whose dark murder to avenge
Pale Isis nightly glowed o'er Mitzraim's sea,
And priestly Nile that glads the land of mystery.

XVIII.

Mithras,—high deity of gorgeous Mede :
 Thammuz, or Adad,—of Chaldaic seer,
 Or old Phœnician by the Hebrew's seed
 Supplanted : Titan, or Hyperion,—fear
 Of new-fledged gods, assailed in cloudy sphere
 Olympic ; Phœbus or Apollo, bright
 And young and fair,—throughout the rolling year
 Circled with song,—Or from the Delphic height,
 Breathing dim oracles, 'mid priest-enriching rite :

XIX.

God,—claimed by regal Incas as their sire,—
 Beyond the wave Columbian, where upcone
 Earth's storehouses of silver : Sovereign fire !—
 The young soul's natural god ! Visible throne
 Of holy Nature's sovereignty unknown,
 Invisible !—by whatsoever name
 Adored and deified throughout our zone,—
 Thy worshippers all held thy risen flame
 Did for the soul adumbrate some great after-drame !

XX.

On shadows these,—and more,—leaned to the verge
 Of their poor pilgrimage ; and, lest I lean
 On shadows, too,—though thousand lights converge
 To deck with loveliness the Nazarene,—
 I hesitate, demur, surmise, and glean,
 Daily, new grounds to doubt the Mythic dress !
 Phœnician woof, once more !—through which is seen,
 I fear, thy ancient face,—bright Comeliness !—
 Fabling with future life poor grave-doomed worms to bless !

XXI.

He whom the Arimathean's tomb enclosed,—
The good,—the toiling one,—the Crucified,—
Who, 'spite of guards, the bonds of death unloosed,
Scattering the men of iron in their pride
Convulsed to helplessness,—and forth did ride
Leading captivity captive !—Is he not,—
Magnific beam !—thy power personified,—
Night-tombed,—and, then, pouring dismay and rout
On Darkness,—while Earth's million morning voices shout ?

XXII.

I love the Galilean :—Lord and Christ
Such goodness I could own ; and, though enshrined
In flesh, could worship : If emparadised,
Beyond the grave, no Eden I could find
Restored,—though all the good of humankind
Were there, and not that yearning One,—the Poor
Who healed, and fed, and blest ! Nay to my mind,
Hell would be Heaven, with him ! horror no more
Could fright,—if such benignant beauty trod its shore !

XXIII.

I love the sweet and simple narrative,—
With all its childlike earnestness,—the page
Quadruple where those love-wrought wonders live :
I would the tale were true :—that heritage
Of immortality it doth presage
Would make me glad indeed :—but doubts becloud
Truth's fountains as their depths I seek to guage,—
Till with this trustless reck'ning I am bowed—
Man's heritage is but a cradle and a shroud !—

XXIV.

Hark!—'tis the turnkey!—and those bars and bolts
 Jar their harsh summons to my nightly nook.
 Farewell, grand Sun! How my weak heart revolts
 At that appalling thought—that my last look
 At thy great light—must come! Oh! I could brook
 The dungeon,—though eterne!—the Priests' own hell,—
 Aye, or a thousand hells,—in thought,—unshook,—
 Rather than Nothingness! And yet the knell,
 I fear, is near, that sounds—*To consciousness farewell!*—

XXV.

After these day-dreams 'neath the summer's sun,—
 The Soul—I mean, the something that doth think
 And dream: Name it aright, thou knowing one
 Who kenn'st the Essence which doth ever shrink
 From its own scrutiny!—began to link
 Night's images to forms she waking saw
 With the interior eye.—

Upon the brink

Of a wild lake I stood, viewing, with awe,
 Again unveiled, the realm of suicidal woe!

XXVI.

The spacious wave, before me, tempest-gloomed
 And bleak and storm-tost, howled; and I seemed froze
 With cold, and, shuddering, felt as if foredoomed
 To sense of mortal hunger. On the shore
 I wandered, while my thoughts, amid the roar
 Of winds and waters, dwelt on One who stilled
 The waves, and fed the hungry; and the more
 My spiritual sense with hunger thrilled
 And cold,—the more that Form my inward vision filled.

XXVII.

And still I wandered by the howling lake,
Imagining what joy succeeded fear
In the poor fishers, when their Master spake
From the night-wave, and said,—‘ Be of good cheer !
‘ ’Tis I !’—while one sprang out to meet him there—
But would have sunk, had not the meek One’s hand
Him rescued. ‘ Who’—I cried—‘ would not revere
‘ Such power and love ?—worship I, on this strand
‘ Would give the Nazarene—did He these waves command.’—

XXVIII.

The soul, in her empassioned working, seemed
T’ have spoken audibly,—whereat, a sound,—
Or, what was likest sound,—came, as I dreamed,
Forth from the caves that hemmed that lake around,
Appalling,—as when one with mortal wound
Is struck, and utters his last agony
Of wild despair. A face that did astound
My spirit met me, as I turned to see
What form to wildly wail on that stern shore might be.

XXIX.

Tongue cannot syllable the blighting curse
Stamped on that dorn and desolate countenance :
For mastery—despair, wrath, shame, remorse,
Contended, in each petrifying glance,—
And still their contest burning sustenance
Drew evermore from the consuming blaze
Within :—‘ My being’s ceaseless heritage
‘ Is agony !’—seemed written in that gaze—
In letters not a universe of joy could raze :

XXX.

It was a look unique in wretchedness :
Such as, in land of penance, could be worn
By none but him who,—in his heart's excess
Of ill,—his gust for guilt, engrained, inborn,—
Betrayed to shameful death, and vilest scorn
Of butchering priests, the Being who only sought
To bless mankind and die ! The look of lorn
Remediless woe with which that face was fraught
Needed no speech to tell—it marked Iscariot.

XXXI.

The guilty spirit knew that he was known :
So livingly the soul made manifest
Her inmost workings, in that visioned zone.—
And who art thou ?—the spirit of unrest
Exclaimed,—that hither com'st on prying quest
To view Perdition's Son ? Let the dark sign
Of thy self-murder,—which these shades unblest
Sternly reveal,—restrain thy thought malign :—
How know'st thou my soul's deed more criminal than thine ?

XXXII.

Worship to Him my treason brought to shame
Thou talk'st of rendering,—did he here display
His power and love,—feigning to shift the blame
Of thy foul unbelief—(thy words bewray
Thy atheist heart !)—on Him who bears high sway
Above,—and, in the chequered roll of time,
Allots each paltry worm his little day :—
Avaunt—dissembler !—distant age and clime
Excuse not unbelief :—'tis the soul's self-spawned crime !

XXXIII.

Depart, proud unbeliever !—Let suffice
That thou hast spied the Traitor : now descry,
More deeply, thine own stain : plan new device
Elsewhere, thy heart with doubt to petrify
Tenfold,—but stay not here !—No sceptic spy
Shall bide with me :—my desolateness I'll share
With none : these blasting shores,—the howling cry
Of this wild lake, are my companions ! Dare
Not thou to offer fellowship with my despair !

XXXIV.

He ceased, a while,—but I no utterance felt,—
Nor power to retrograde. As if a spell
Flowed from the spirit's eyes, and, entering, dwelt
Within my being's fenceless citadel,—
I stood transfixt, and terror-frore ! Rebel
Against this silent helplessness, or break
The spell of dread, I could not ; though, to tell
My heart unto the fallen one, with ache
Unutterable, I yearned ! Again, Iscariot spake :—

XXXV.

Dost still delay ? Fear'st thou to go alone ?
Take with thee, then, from out my serpent cave,
For company, yon fallen minion !
Come,—hear him, in his guilt-struck madness, rave,
And cry he cannot the fierce scorn outbrave
Of all he meets in Hell !—though in Earth's life,
He outfaced cursings dread,—until they clave
Unto his coward soul ; and, now, the strife
Of condign woe within, his face doth hieroglyph.

XXXVI.

Come, see if thou canst read ! Thy frozen isle
He lately fled :—belike of brotherhood,
The memory, may revive this thing of guile,—
This viper fell, that drained his country's blood,
And then let out his own ! From his low mood
Of infantile despair thy form may serve
This cast-off sleuth-hound of the craven brood
To rouse, once more. Follow !—if thou hast nerve
Of soul to look on horror, nor from courage swerve !

XXXVII.

I followed : for, albeit the spell of dread
Forbade my utterance still,—desire prevailed,
And power returned, to move. The spirit led
Where horror seemed enthroned with face unveiled :
Crowds of huge snakes their coils innum'rous trailed,—
Forming a labyrinthine cave,—vast volve
On volve, with scales impenetrable mailed,—
All seeming fierce the mandate to dissolve
That held them there their mighty folds to circumvolve.

XXXVIII.

How achingly their eyes, amidst their wrath,
Large pain expressed,—and how my fear was blent
With sympathetic pain, as on that path,
Encompassed, thick, with torturous coils, I went,
Life's waking wave with Sleep's stream confluent
Can never from my beating brain efface !—
Designed for deepest treason's chastisement
That cavern seemed : goal for sin's fiercest race :
The bourne for Guilt too foul its footsteps to retrace.

XXXIX.

A livid, baleful light the serpents clothed,—
 Or seemed to issue from each burning throat
 The monsters ever shewed. The frayed soul loathed
 Her vision, with such shuddering horror fraught,
 And prayed for gloom. At length, Iscariot raught
 A space circled with snakes in deathly ' array
 Upreared,—pointing with forked tongues, where smote
 His breast, as on the rocky floor he lay
 In speechless agony,—the suicide of Cray !——

XL.

Arise,—and see how curl thy brother snakes
 Around thee !—cried the tortured Hebrew ghost :—
 Look on the torment which at length o'ertakes
 The perjured traitor on that cursed coast
 He ploughed Life's sea to find ! Vile viper !—lost,
 Abhorred !—driven forth of all in Hell's own realm !—
 Arise, I say,—nor lie thus torn and tossed,—
 Tyrant,—who swayed a triple nation's helm,
 Erewhile, and mocked while suffering did the land o'erwhelm !

XLI.

By mortal images her dread describe
 Cannot the waking mind, recalling, sad,
 That dream, and memory of each horrid gibe
 Iscariot uttered,—as if wildly glad
 To vent his rage, and pain to superadd
 Unto his fellow's pain ! Rackt, speechless, prone,—
 While his curved spine the huge snakes cupola'd,
 And venom'd anger from their eyes outshone,— [one.
 O'erwhelmed, soul-numbed with woe,—remained the prostrate

XLII.

Will no taunt rouse Hibernia's fallen child,—
 Her cut-throat and his own ? Judas resumed,—
 And swift, the snakes, the prone form leaving, coiled
 Around the Jew their frightful folds, and fumed
 More wildly as he raged :—What hath consumed
 Thy courage, mighty parasite ? On earth
 A prince !—with worm-worn monarchs catacombed !
 How,—after all thy greatness,—can this dearth
 Of pride enshroud thee ?—Wilt thou wake old Hell to mirth ?

XLIII.

Vile pandar to the pomp-blown, lust-swoln Guelph !
 Arise I say,—avaunt !—betake thee hence !
 I will be fellow to Hell's inmost self—
 Rather than thee, with all thy guile prepense,—
 Thou double-dealer in each mean pretence
 For forging fetters to thy fatherland !—
 Her champion—first !—and then—true subsequence
 Of falsehood ! tool, her slavery that planned,
 And for his guilty wages stretched his guilty hand !

XLIV.

Traitor,—that sold his country for a price—
 Traitor !—a price !—the prostrate shape outburst ; —
 Did *I* betray my Master, with device
 Of a false kiss, unto the foes athirst
 For his most precious blood,—my heart endorsed,
 The while, with settlement of black receipt—
 The thirty silver pieces ?——

Snake accurst !—

Retorted Judas,—think not here to cheat
 Thy soul : *my* deed was foretold by the Paraclete !

XLV.

The Comforter on earth I never knew—
But here I know Him ! 'Tis my soul's support
That He, who did of old the seers endue
With mystic foresight, hath my being begirt
With deep assurance that, though long the sport
Of these strange tortures, yet, the hour will come
When my freed spirit shall her strength exert,
And wing her way to that bright happy home
Where joys, for sinners purged of stain, perpetual, bloom !



XLVI.

My crime, in verity, belongs not me ;
And, therefore, penance, endless, cannot claim
Me hers :—I am the child of Destiny !
But thou,—thou self-stained thing of scorn and shame !
Thou torturer of millions !—whose foul aim,
Self-moved,—self-nurtured, was thyself to steep
In crime, thy kind in tears,—enduring blame
Thyself must bear ;—and o'er thy soul shall sweep
The tempest of his wrath,—relentless, ceaseless, deep !——

XLVII.

Speak'st thou of destiny,—base Jewish churl !—
Fiercely the tortured, maddened minion cried,—
And sprang erect,—for, now, the tempest whirl
Of bygone luns the fall'n liberticide
Revisited, and puffed with fumes of pride,
As erst in mortal life :—Of destiny
Talk'st thou ?—he wildly said ;—Think'st thou to hide
Thy old arch-treason, thus ? How, then, may I,
Much more, by Fate's behests, my life-deeds justify ?

XLVIII.

Was I not beckoned, in my climbing path,
 By beaming visions supernatural ?
 Shall I the sentence of eternal wrath
 Acknowledge just,—since dreams, prophetic
 Of what I should be, did my will enthrall,—
 And bright celestial shapes, in gems and gold
 Bediadem'd, with voices musical,
 Nightly, me bade to grasp with seizure bold
 The prize, in Fate's dark book, for Castlereagh enroll'd——

XLIX.

Hah ! utter not thy name—that synonym
 Of Villany !—exclaimed the self-destroyed
 Betrayer of the Blest ;—It doth bedim
 Darkness itself to utter it !—'Avoid
 ' That sound accurst !'—the souls in air upbuoyed,
 New come from Earth, in dismall'st accents, yell :
 ' Forbear that guilty name to tell !'—the void
 Waste shore and caves re-echo :—Serpent fell,—
 I charge thee,—utter not again that hated name, in Hell!——

L.

Elate still reared Cray's suicide,—enwrap
 In old life-dreams,—the soul's habiliment
 Of morrice-pomp, for holidays adapt
 At change and full of moon, on earth : He lent
 No audience to this chiding ; but, intent
 On telling his pride's dreams, began to spume,
 And struggle after phrase grandiloquent,—
 The soul's old habitude,—wherewith t' exhume
 His moon-struck visions vain from memory's pictured tomb.——

LI.

"Twas in my manhood's youth,—he proudly said; (¹)
I tarried, for one night, fast by the wave
Atlantic, where, in lovely verdure spread,
Old Erin laughs to hear the north-wind rave.
The hall that welcomed me was old,—but brave
And stately stood, as stands the forest oak
After five hundred autumn tempests have
Against his stalwart arms their fury broke,
And, eke, five hundred times stripped of his kingly cloak.

LII.

The sun was sinking in the gorgeous west,
As I drew near. The dark-hued ivy hung
Its graceful tendrils, like a bridal vest,
Around the aged walls,—while softly sung
The minstrel evening breeze, with wanton tongue,
That castle's marriage to King Time. Bedight
With rainbow tints the clouds resplendent flung
On me, on towers, and leaves,—for magic sprite [knight.
Fit bower that seemed,—and I, some wand'ring love-spelled

LIII.

Around my steed the giddy flittermouse
Sported, in whimsical ellipse, and passed,
On leathern sails, with haste to tell his spouse,—
Hung, wizard-wise, by heels, in chimney vast,—
While listed him the owl, that sage dynast
Of ruin,—that a stranger marked by Fate
For princely fortunes was approaching fast
The moat,—and soon beneath the old arched gate
Would bend, where, hoarsely croaking, the dark corven sate—

LIV.

Forbear, poor palterer, thy crazy tale
Of bats and owls and ravens !—cried the fierce
And fallen Jew ;—Think of the bitter bale
Which doth in Hell thy doating soul amerce
For mortal sins ! Let tortures real disperse
Thy lingering dreams of mock beatitude !
For pity sheer, I'll list thee misrehearse
Thy ditty ;—but, in strain, at least, subdued
To common-sense, this false apocalypse conclude !——

LV.

My host received his guest as well beseemed
The lordly tenant of this feudal tower ;—
In vein ornate the patricide rethemed
His air-built pride :—His child, —a peerless flower
Of loveliness, —her eyes a brighter dower
Than myriad pearls, —drooped o'er her father's arm,
As droops a lily, after evening shower,
Upon its parent stem. Soft, chaste alarm
Her light-veiled bosom told with undulating charm.

LVI.

Full lowly bowed the reverend seneschal,
Girdled for state, with massive silver key,
As on we passed into the banquet-hall :
And, niched, among the antique carvery
The hinds were seen, on meekly bended knee,
With perfumed cressets : evermore there met
The ravished ear, from unseen minstrelsy,
Hushed dulcet tones of harp and flageolette
Blent with rapt chaunt of madrigal and canzonette.

LVII.

With festal revelry the banquet rang,
Till tusk and antler, spear and hauberk shook,
Around the baron's hall. Anon, upsprang
The younger guests : his ladye-love each took :
The dovelets blushed, and yielded, with coy look :
Then thrilled the rebecks, while the merry dance
Sped on,—until, for mirth and wine, forsook
Their dizzy sport the youngsters,—still, askaunce,
Eyeing each other, in their love's exuberance.

LVIII.

'Twas midnight : and, before they said 'farewell !'
The revellers asked a boon of harper gray,—
Who dipped his beard in the gold Rhenish bell
With youthful zeal,—that he for them should say,
Unto his harp's loud chime, a roundelay
Of olden days,—in Tara's hall once told,
When high O'Connor sat in proud array
Of crowned regality, and Erin old,
From sea to sea, with joy, bowed to the warrior bold. (2)

LIX.

I cannot to thine ear the deeds recount
Of old Milesian chieftains, a stern line,
The Minstrel sang :—in mem'ry's transient fount
So many streams of weal and bale combine,
'Through life,—and then the soul her anodyne
Inevitable of death must taste,—and now
We drink this bitter cup in Hell's confine,—
That the mind shrinks, as if from mortal throe,
Her total journey, like a drudge, to overgo.

LX.

Suffice it that I say that aged man
Wound up his lay with patriotic tears—
While my heart raged, as if a hurricane
Of joys, its current, with alternate fears,
Had swoln. I felt distraught as one who hears
Himself pœan'd for victory ungained
As yet, but certain to be won,—though years
Of hate before he reach the laurel stained
With blood be his : that victory's fruit—his country chained !

LXI.

With taper dim, through vault and thick-ribbed arch,
Six aged hinds, to light me to my sleep
Stept gravely on, as if in funeral march.
But,—when alone,—how my cold skin did creep
To see grim eyes upon me scowl and peep
From out the oaken pannels round my couch !
One painted warrior looked as he would leap
And crush me, for a foreign searamouch,—
Such frowning hatred did his portraiture avouch !

LXII.

Plumed like a hearse, a lordly canopy
Adorned my bed, in old baronial mode,—
Its cumbrous velvet folds on ebony
Supported, and their drooping festooned load
Burthened with gold and jet. Breathless, I glode
Into my downy nest, in darkness, while
My throbbing heart 'gan thickly to forbode
Some unknown ill ; but, struggling, I this pile
Of spectrous fears threw off, as fancies infantile,

LXIII.

Sleep fled ; and soon the gray-haired harper's song
Filled all my chamber, like a serenade
Which some benign enchantment did prolong
Until so heavenly melody it made
That Darkness hasted to her nether shade,
And light held sceptre in that resting-place
Of ancient pomp. O'erjoyed, and yet afraid,
I gazed around—when lo ! a form of grace,
Haloed with glorious light, revealed its radiant face !

LXIV.

Resting my arm upon my silken pillow,—
But helplessly recumbent as a child,—
I lay, and gazed,—while, like the heaving billow,
My bosom swelled ;—yet, though with wonder wild
My hair stood up,—serene, that angel mild
Stood pointing to a seat nigh to a throne,
Limn'd all in light,—and, with high meaning, smiled—
A moment—and that visioned form had flown,—
But woke my soul—like warrior's at the clarion !

LXV.

'Fame—fame !'—shouted my burning, bounding heart,—
Until my tongue made vocal its excess:
'I will enact the splendid afterpart
'Of life begun—this visioned beauteousness,—
'This minstrelsy divine,—alike, confess
'My destiny appoints ! They shall not weave
'In vain, their web of promised bounteousness—
'The Fatal Sisters three ! My soul shall cleave
'Unto its toil—until it doth the palm achieve !'

LXVI.

Next morn, unto my grave and lordly host
I did these visions of the night reveal.
With deeply troubled look his breast he crossed,
And spake these words : ‘ Thy lips, I charge thee, seal
‘ Upon this theme—if that thou wishest weal
‘ To thine own soul : for signal woe or joy
‘ Upon thy rest these midnight visions steal :
‘ High destiny is thine—if thou destroy
‘ It not—thyself !—Know,—thou hast seen the Radiant Boy !’

LXVII.

What followed on these visitations bright——
Enough !—the Palestinian suicide
Exclaimed :—If longer ravings to indite
Thou dost attempt—these serpents that deride
Thy tale already, sequel to such pride
Run mad will bring with heavy emphasis.
What followed ?—why, thy guilty heart was dyed
With blood : thy hand, for very cowardice,
Thou didst not stain—except to shorten thy life’s lease !

LXVIII.

What followed ?—Thou art here !—Thy race of guilt,
And pride and lunacy, on earth, outrun ;—
By thine own hand thy life’s vile current spilt,—
And Hell’s eternal agony begun :—
Yet, seeking, like a lunatic buffoon,
To mock thyself and others with the dreams
That haunt the brains of each mere child o’th’ moon,
Beneath his natal star’s pale borrowed beams
Sleeping,—’mid ruins gray,—or lost, by haunted streams.

LXIX.

The Radiant Boy—forsooth ! Some doating fool,
Possessed with superstitious wonderment,
And barbarous pride of fancied elvish rule
Sway'd o'er his barbarous house,—a ready vent
Found in thy crazy ear for lunes uppent
Too long within his heated mind. How long
Wilt mock thyself ? For ever thou art rent
From peace ; and, on thy soul, with tortures strong,
The poor's Avenger recompenseth, now, their wrong !

LXX.

I tell thee, fierce one !—that this radiant form—
Cried the fall'n lunatic,—again I saw,
While sitting in the senate ; there, no swarm
The moon could raise of vaporous fancies raw
To juggle and mislead my brain. What law
Of mind hast thou discovered, in this crypt
Of horrors, that can warrant thee to draw
Hope for thyself from old prophetic script—
And yet to slay my soul with Fate's strong shield equipt ?

LXXI.

Shall I,—of mental liberty bereft
In life ;—my will, Mind's pilot, all enthralled ;—
The soul's frail bark herself to fury left
Of these tempestuous visions swift upcalled
Without her own intent ;—shall I, appalled
With fear of justice, from His sentence shrink ?
The weakest worm on earth that ever crawled
Would not,—thus impulsed even to the brink
Of life,—consent to its own curse, and, yielding, sink.—

LXXII.

Whether thy soul to its own curse consent,
Or ape the rebel,—said Iscariot,
That curse waits not thy blind arbitrament :
’Tis fixt—with mine : in vain we seek to blot
The sentence from His book : our fatal lot
Is cast,—and must be borne. Thou hadst thy tide
Of sanity : if, then, her antidote
The sober soul, industrious, had applied
To thy disease, she would have purged this crazy pride.

LXXIII.

Thou know’st this true : then, cease thy heart to chafe
With these ill-masked deceits. My soul dislodge
From bulwark which Jehovah doth vouchsafe
Thou canst not. Good from Evil the Great Judge
Produceth : not delirious subterfuge
Is this. God did appoint my soul to sin :
Unto his high decree I bow : His drudge
I am : His purpose answered—I shall win
My seat in that bright realm where beam the seraphim !——

LXXIV.

Evanished, now, his air of pomp superb,
And shook with woe—the fallen thing of state :
His frenzy fled.——

Alas ! how deep reverb

These shades my curse ! he cried :—in vain I prate
Of impulses and dreams, with wish to palliate
My conscious guilt : I feel my sentence just !
And now, with trust devout, to mitigate
My woe, I’ll seek : I bow to His august
Decree : I, also, in His Providence will trust !

LXXV.

Son of Perdition !—if thou wert by Heav'n
Designed, mysteriously, a guilty aid
Of holy purposes ;—if, thus, the leav'n
Of evils which His universe pervade,
By His permission, God hath decreed and made
A source of blessing ;—may not I look up
Beyond the cope of this dark, joyless shade,
For dawn of bliss ? Unto the dregs, if hope
Be there, unmutm'ring, will I drink my bitter cup.—

LXXVI.

Know, humbled tyrant,—though my soul begins
Thy miseries to pity, and forget
Her own,—spake Judas ;—penalty for sins
Thou canst not choose but feel : a deep, dark debt
Of woe thou hast to pay : for thee doth whet
Her torturous beak a vulture more malign
Than gnawed the fabled Titan : Conscience yet
Must prey upon thee, till thou wail and pine ;—
And, still, for ages, must thou feel her fangs condign !

LXXVII.

' Unmutm'ring '—wilt thou drink of Torture's dregs ?
Why, thou hast not the courage of a worm
When trouble truly comes : thy spirit begs
For ease, ev'n now—while only in its germ
Of misery,—and ere the countless term
Of its desert of pain is, scarce, begun !
How wilt thou mutmur, then, against the storm
Of penal wrath enhanced,—and seek to shun
Thy cup,—'plaining the measure doth the brim o'errun ?

LXXVIII.

Yet, to the bitter dregs it must be drunk !
The Guelph loved fawning ; but in Hell's domain,
Thy power of courtier-cozenage is shrunk
And withered : thou would'st coax, and cant, and feign,
With torment's executioner, in vain :—
Conscience—I mean. Hah ! even now the edge
Of her fell tooth is sinking in thee ! Pain
Unintermittent,—pain without assuage,—
That thou must suffer still will be the direful pledge !

LXXIX.

Thou feel'st thy portion just ; but like a lithe
And eager adder 'neath the planted hoof
Of forest steed or ox, dost twist and writhe,
With madd'ning agony. Hah ! how aloof
Thou stood'st from mercy, while on earth ! Disproof
That millions starved and suffered, thy false tongue
Forged, daily : not a tear-drop in behoof
Of suffering from thy stony eyes was wrung
For one of all the thousands that thy treachery stung !

LXXX.

Wilt thou deny that there is suffering—now ?
Now ?—while the worm of conscience thou dost feel ?
Th' undying worm ? Why, what is the weak woe
Thy coward soul can bear,—though Hell unseal
Her quintessence of torture ? 'Twill be weal,
Compared with aggregate of woe thy heart,
Remorseless, wrung from millions whose appeal
To Right was vain !—millions of sires whose part
Of woe though first, was least : they left an after-smart !

LXXXI.

For whom ! For millions of their starveling sons
And famished daughters,—who still pine and moil
By law : mere skin-and-bone automatons !
Oh ! serpent !—how my spirit's tide doth boil
Against such viperousness as thine ! The coil
Of mortal life is mine no more :—I would
It were—but for one day ! How would I toil
To lave my hands in some such viper's blood,—
And purge my mountain sin—by spilling the vile flood !

LXXXII.

What breathe ye for, on earth,—such slime-born things ?
To suck your brethren's blood ; and, while ye gorge,
Mock your poor victims ! Thy dark revellings
In human blood and human tears their verge
Have reached ;—but, how it swells—the ocean surge
Of tears and blood—thou and thy teacher drew—
A fresh-born stream—from anguished hearts ! 'Twould purge
Cain's sin and mine,—with patriot brand to hew
Into one heart like thine a festive avenue !

LXXXIII.

Hah ! how they shouted while thy mangled clay
Was borne unto its burial !—the few men
Whom blood of their old fathers, for one day,
Stirred into more than slaves ! Oh ! it was then—
While terror quelled even the iron ken
Of thy stern fellow-lizard, who his claw
Held up, and breathed an idiot ' hush ! '—'twas then
Thy waking victims should have filled Death's maw
With the whole vermin brood that human vitals gnaw !

LXXXIV.

Thou—' also, to His Providence wilt trust !'
A hypocrite thou wert, in life ; in death
A coward : thou art both, in Hell ! Thy gust
For meanest vice fled not with flight of breath :
Thy soul—escaped from out her pampered sheath—
Yet hugs her stain ! What wonder,—though the Guelph
Oft spat upon thee,—that thou, still, the path
Didst keep of fawning ? Meanest, vilest elf,
That ever played the tyrant,—loathe thy' abortive self!——

LXXXV.

Shall I from *thee* receive this foul rebuke ?—
Respake the soul-stung, fallen sycophant ;—
Tamely, fierce gibe and dark contumely brook
From one whom all men deem a miscreant,—
An outcast vile,—and not hurl back each taunt,
Each withering sneer, wherewith thou seek'st to gall
My wound ? Were my whole essence adamant
The soul would strive herself to disenthral
From force of gibes so fiercely, foully cynical.

LXXXVI.

From thine own mouth I will thy heart convict
Of its inherent vileness. Thou hast striven
With unrelenting malice to afflict
My soul ; and thy foul game hath foully thriven,
Chiefly, by sarcasms 'gainst the prince now riven
From all lust linked him with above the grave.
Suppose thy censure forceful : grant him given
A living prey to his heart's vice—a slave
To filth so abject that the worms, which now their brave

LXXXVII.

Carousal hold amidst his putrid clay,
Find him not more uncleanly than in life :
Grant that his kingly course affords no trait
Of nobleness : that selfishness was rife
As lust within him : that his soul a strife
Perpetual shewed the trampled human crowd
To bruise more vilely still : that while the knife
Was at their very throats his scoffs were loud,
And he could see them bleed and die,—unmoved, unbowed :

LXXXVIII.

Grant that he thirsted but for power to wring
From out his subjects' hearts the last life-drop—
If it would minister to his revelling
One guilty hour : grant that a sot, a fop,
He was by turns : a blackleg, then—to groupe
Of swindlers fogleman !—becoming, soon,
The god of earthly gauds, and to the top
Of his vain bent fooled on, by each baboon,
Tinselled with titles, that beheld the holy spoon

LXXXIX.

Bestow its unctuous virtue on his head,—
And laughed to see the gew-gaw placed thereon,—
The grown child's gew-gaw !—while, in pomp outspread,
Peers, prostitutes, pimps, prelates, round his throne
Knelt blasphemously homaging the o'ergrown
Monster of vice,—their grandeur fed, the while,
With tears of starving thousands ! Grant this known,—
And then,—poor, silly Jew !—I can but smile
To hear thee thus my fallen soul taunt and revile !

XC.

For,—if the royal Guelph my mirror were—
Iscaiot ! who was thine ? Hah ! how thine eye
Bespeaks thy heart's deep shame ! Thy exemplar
How worshipful—how holy—and how high
In excellence ! His beams to purify
Thy baseness did that sun of goodness pour
Upon thee—but thy sin was of a dye
Too deep-grained—and thy heart, within its core,
Worshipped an earthen god, and there his image wore.

XCI.

And thus it was in vain that to thy eyes—
Within thy ears—His deeds and words of love
Were present, day by day. Anatomize
Thy heart, and thou wilt find that stain enwove,
Entextured there, ev'n now ! Yea did here move
The Blessed One before thee clad in light
And loveliness—the vision would not prove
Sufficient to o'erawe thee, if to sight
The silver bait were offered : that thou could'st not slight !

XCII.

Thou art accurst, and justly. Vile and low
Were thy desires through life : a groveller base
Thou ever wert, and vainly from Hell's woe
Thou dreamst to be set free. Hell's thy own place,
Mean barterer ! Unless thou canst erase
From out thy sordid nature the low vice
Of avarice—dream thou no more of grace !
Before thou sitt'st in Jesu's Paradise,
Satan, himself, will win an apotheosis !

XCIII.

How can it be,—vile Traitor to the Blest !
That after-knowledge by thy sinful soul
Of God's foreknowledge can of guilt divest
Thy mind ? His knowledge did not thee control
Before thy act: 'twas thy heart's treachery foul,—
Thy itch for petty pelf,—base, sordid thing !—
That spiritual leprosy,—which stole
Daily, through all thy heart, until its spring
Was tainted,—and thou fledd'st to bloody bartering !

XCIV.

Proclaimed He not thy treason while it germed
Within thy heart shut up ?—yea, ere a word
Forth budding from the hell-sown seed confirmed
Thy foul intent ? Perditioned, curst, abhorred,
Thou wast—before thy mother's womb was stored
With embryo of thy being ! 'Twas decreed
Of the Most High—witness His own record !—
That thou shouldst breathe solely to do that deed,—
And on thy traitorous soul th' undying worm should feed !—

XCV.

He spake no more ; for, speechless horror filled
His soul to witness how the tortured ghost
Of Judas writhed with rage,—and in what wild
Distorted folds the scaly monsters tossed
Their horrid hugeness,—with the Traitor lost
A mystic sympathy evincing ! Hell
Seemed Hell indeed, while I upon that coast
Beheld those snakes round Judas coil and swell,—
As if to wilder rage his soul they would impel !

XCVI.

I trembled as I gazed. But, as I dreamed,
 A wondrous change swift o'er my vision came.
 No more the serpents writhed : no more outgleamed
 From the Jew's eyes a wild demoniac flame :
 Calm and subdued, mingling with conscious shame
 A look of dignity, awhile he stood ;
 And, when he speech resumed, how deep the blame
 His deed deserved—his Treason 'gainst the Good—
 Acknowledged;—and, forthwith, a mystic theme pursued.

XCVII.

More, far more than thou say'st, is mine, of guilt,—
 He said :—Deeper, far deeper, is my stain !
 Not that I count it thus because they spilt
 The blood of Ilim I sold : they would have ta'en
 His precious life had no vile thought of gain
 E'er prompted me, or others, to betray
 The Blessed One. What can the wolf restrain
 From the meek lamb ?—the vulture from his prey ?—
 How shall the Good have peace, when Wickedness bears sway ?

XCVIII.

Who that e'er dared to mock the tyrant's gaud,—
 The hypocrite's deceit,—could hope escape
 From Tyranny, and Avarice, and Fraud ?—
 The demon-trinity knaves still bedrape
 With pomp and sanctity, till slaves, agape
 And palsied, see them wolve and victimize
 The best of human kind,—yea, tamely shape
 Their coward tongues to praise,—when they should rise
 And hurl to dust the things of pride, and greed, and lies !

XCIX.

My stain is deeper than thou know'st to tell.
Not that I count it thus because I sought
For glittering dust His precious life to sell :
My poverty begat in me that thought,
When I discerned the toils had nearly raught
Their aim who laid them for his life. False one !
My spirit's crime, in this, thou hast o'erwrought ;
And, if thou look'st within, wilt see thy own
Mean soul with tide of pelfish love is overrun !

C.

A sordid thing—thou said'st I was ! Is toy
More precious to a child, than gaudy sheen
Of baubles was to thee ? Wert *thou* ne'er coy
Of silver as the price of blood ? With mien
Repentant didst *thou* restitute, and clean
Confession make—before thy weasand-stroke,
As I—before my rope ? Wert thou not keen
Of gold and power until thy clutch was broke
With o'erstrained struggles to increase thy country's yoke ?

CI.

Oh ! I might limn thy worthless effigy,—
And with a truthful power,—until thy heart
Were wrung to its vile core with agony !
But the strong tempest leaves me ; and the smart
Wherewith thy soul would writhe would but impart
A kindred woe to mine. A sordid thing !—
Saidst thou, I was ? Oh ! how old thoughts upstart
At that tyrannic taunt !—old thoughts that wring
My soul—until they well-nigh back the tempest bring !

CII.

Hah ! tortured torturer !—while they moil for bread,
If poor men sink in vice,—if, 'midst their toil,
So ill-requited, grovelling thoughts are bred
In Labour's children,—if th' uncultured soil
Of their neglected minds base weeds defile,—
Whose is the crime ? The trampled toilers' ?—or
Their lordlings' ?—who, while they, as thou, revile
And taunt the trampled ones,—trample them more,—
And hug, themselves, the vice they charge their slaves to' abhor !

CIII.

A groveller if I was—charge thine own tribe—
The titled plunderers—with the guilt !—or make
Them fellow-sharers with the knavish scribe
And canting Pharisee ! Each did partake
The spoils of my hard toil upon the lake ;—
But,—while they feasted,—left me still to war
With hunger, cold, and tempest,—or the ache
Of oft-impending death : disdaining care
Whether I did the brute's or human nature wear !

CIV.

Unto their Judge I leave them ! He will mete
Their sentence with the measure just,—as now
He measures thine. Forbear thy old deceit,
Henceforth. Thy guilt, in making grovellers low,
Exceeds my guilt in grovelling. Lowly bow
Thy heart in shame—rather than seek by taunt
And scoff to harass mine. My stain, I know,
Is deep ; no more of guiltlessness I vaunt :
That boast were vain for Hell's self-exiled habitant.

CV.

Aye,—'twas the sun of goodness on me shone :
Goodness unmeasured, undescribed, untold :
Goodness that strove its godlike benison
To pour, alike, upon the ingrate cold
As on the hearts its mercies manifold
Made dance with thankfulness : Goodness unfelt,
Unwitnessed, unconceived, in mortal mould,
Before : Goodness that from its treasure dealt
So bounteously, as if it would the wide world melt

CVI.

Into a sea of bliss, and deluge heart
Of man with joy ! Goodness that wept with those
Whom grief constrained to weep : Goodness the smart
In human bosoms torn by earthly throes
That strove to medicate with love,—to close
The spirit's wounds with tenderness,—and heal
The mind bruised with the burthen of its woes :
Goodness that glowed with inexhaustless zeal
To spread, enhance, perfect, eternize human weal !

CVII.

And I, amidst His radiance of love,
Was dark and frozen still ! Curst be my doom
To all eternity ! Never above
May I behold that slighted One ! My gloom
The heavenly beam of mercy failed to' illume
On earth,—and I deserve not now to find
The love I slighted then : if, to consume
My soul, Hell's stores of torments were combined—
Too lightly, even then, had Heaven my curse assigned !

CVIII.

Ten thousand hells hath merited—my sin
Against Ineffable Goodness!—How I rave
Amid my madness! Futile medicine
For mind diseased were tortures that deprave
Still more the spiritual health : in torment's wave
Were the soul steeped for ever, her guilt's grain
Would only be more fixed : who scourge the slave
On earth, but nurture, by his galling pain,
The rebel will they would by chastisement restrain.

CIX.

Great Judge of men and angels,—'tis not thus
Thou governest!—though I, in th' Hell I sought,
Like fools on earth, such censure libellous
Have oft pronounced upon thy rule, and thought
My folly wisdom! Human crime is caught
In fatal net of its own consequence :
Afflict Thou dost not : though our minds, mistaught,
Oft represent Thy vast omnipotence
Bending to scourge poor worms for waywardness prepense!

CX.

For waywardness that in the dust to crawl
Inclines, beyond the track Thy wisdom hath
Appointed.—Spirit, though Hell's shades enthrall
Our being, we are not of vengeful wrath
The victims,—but have found, by self-made path,
The suffering we pursued—of choice : not force.
Evil, remedial of itself,—by death,
Pain, suffering, grief, repentance, shame, remorse,—
God hath appointed : Evil, breathes not endless curse.

CXI.

Evil, for means of richest, greatest good
The uncontrolled Controller hath devised :
Such His peculiar scheme. O what a flood
Of beatific light hath now baptised
My spirit ! Joy shall be eternalized—
But Woe, throughout all space, shall be destroyed.
Goodness Ineffable disnaturalized
Would be,—Jehovah's Deity be void,—
Unless from pain His universe were purified.

CXII.

Spirit,—rejoice, ev'n though the gnawing worm
Enter thine inmost essence, and pain pierce
Thy being to the core ! Maugre this storm
Of torture, we shall reach repose : this fierce
Consuming woe shall end ; the Universe
Shall be, through endless ages, resonant
With voices tuned by joy : Love shall rehearse
The Maker's wisdom, and His creatures chaunt,
Blissful, the everlasting chorus jubilant !

CXIII.

Why,—how I rave again !—with visage changed
The spirit called of old ' Perdition's Son '
Exclaimed :—Is not my tortured soul estranged
From happiness ? Do I not hate mine own
Existence ?—for annihilation groan,—
And hate all that partake this life unblest ?
Leave me, foul sprite,—to my despair alone !
Dost thou not know that sceptred ghosts make quest
For fawning things that will their robbers' right attest ?

CXIV.

Such errand to my cavern, late, did bring
Old gray Achitophel—the cast-off tool
Of royalty, who, still, like thee, doth cling
To tyrants, though they spurn him. Kingly rule
Grows problematical: on earth, the dull
Tame slaves of toil sullenly fold their hands,
Dreaming to starve their lords: Hell's self is full
Of rebel thoughts 'gainst Thrones: brood of brigands
Quake 'mid their pictured pomps: their dread thy zeal demands.

CXV.

Haste, minion—to recruit the minished host
Of their defenders—thou who didst so well
Subserve their pride on earth! Never more boast
Of boundless loyalty—if thus rebel
Thy fears 'gainst duty, till resolve they quell.
Hah! pangs of shame thy spirit paralyze!
Thy dread is just—Outcast of earth and hell!
Hell's Thrones, to scout thee, would indignant rise—
Did they thy craven guilt-smit image recognize!

CXVI.

Base spawn of fear and guilt,—get hence, and cage
Thy lunacy in some dark desert nook
Where none may hear thee curse, and spume, and rage—
For curse thou shalt!—Hence!—and again invoke
The Radiant Boy!—

Cease, hellish fiend, to mock

My tortures! cried the fallen minion, stung,
Anew to madness:—Lo! thy gibes have woke,
Again that form!—but Hell's dark clime hath flung
Strange horror o'er that brow that beamed so fair and young.

CXVII.

Hah ! false, deluding phantom,—now I see
 Thou wert a minister of Hell to beck
 Me to destruction !—Jew ! why thus at me
 Glarest thou, wonder-struck,—and seem'st to seek
 Vainly, the object of my fear ? Apeak
 Among thy snakes, he sits :—behold him there !
 View'st not his frown ?—dost thou not hear him speak ?
 Off, Radiant fiend !—I know thee, now !—forbear
 To taunt my soul with crime for which thou spread'st the snare !

CXVIII.

Thou liest, foul sprite !—the guilt of Emmett's blood
 Belongs not me : they counselled him who fled
 When brave Fitzgerald fell : joined with his mood
 Of rashness, this to hopeless struggle led
 That gallant boy ! Fiend ! urge it not !—the thread
 Of Fate in his own hands he took ;—to woo
 The daughter of the golden-tongued, instead
 Of flight, chose danger ⁽³⁾—and the tiger crew
 Of Power, with vengeful fangs, upon his own life drew !

CXIX.

Foul spirit, mock me not !—thou dost but tempt
 My soul to deeper crime !—

False minion, hold !

Iscaiot cried ;—this region is exempt
 From Earth's old dreams : nought seest thou, but hast sold
 Thyself to falsehood till thy heart is bold
 To forge wild frauds ev'n here !—

Curst Judas, cease

Thy taunts !—‘ I come’ it saith,—‘ thy heaven t'unfold—
 ‘ Thy ancient heav'n—the haggard, thought-worn face
 ‘ Of Pitt: that thou mayst dream old dreams of power and place !’

CXX.

Perditioned Jew !—seest not the portraiture
 The fiend hath raised ?—List what he saith !—‘ Now view
 ‘ The magic eye, once more, which cleft th’ obscure
 ‘ Opaque of thy dull clay,—his fit tool knew,—
 ‘ Accepted thy meek offers to eschew
 ‘ Rash, youthful promises,—and cheered with smiles,
 ‘ Prurient with place, the recreant to pursue
 ‘ His snaky course of patricide ! Recoils
 ‘ Thy spirit from such vision of its patriot toils ?

CXXI.

‘ Dost think it would recal the withering sneers
 ‘ Of Ponsonby,—or Grattan’s lightning glance,—
 ‘ Till thou wouldst quail with sense of ancient fears ?
 ‘ Courage ! thou thing of cut-throat puissance !
 ‘ What of their sarcasm’s empty fulminance ?
 ‘ Thou wast a victor—’spite of all their gibes !
 ‘ Thy country’s suicide was won !—Perchance
 ‘ Thy own for smallest sin Hibernia’s tribes
 ‘ Will count—the hosts thou sold’st to Pitt for traitor bribes !’

CXXII.

Vile Jew ! why dost thou scoff with hellish glee ?
 Hark !—’tis the Fiend, again—‘ Would’st gaze
 ‘ On Brandreth’s gory head ?—I’ll bring it thee,
 ‘ Fresh reeking from the scaffold, with the glaze
 ‘ Of death still in its eyes ! Hah ! thou shalt craze
 ‘ With joy, gloating thy fill upon that throat—
 ‘ The mangled throat of Thistlewood !—Pourtrays
 ‘ It thy own wound ?—Stifle the troublous thought,—
 ‘ And once, again, upon thy spy-trapped victim gloat !’

CXXIII.

The Fiend's fierce eyes—how gleefully and fell
 They glisten—like the eyes of Earth's vile things
 That hunt for blood! Again it saith ' How well
 ' The eyes of Castles and their glistenings,—
 ' Edwards' and Oliver's,—o'er traffickings
 ' Of blood for gold—thou dost remember!—Start
 ' Not now;—for, swift, thy Radiant angel's wings
 ' Shall toil to bring—that thou mayst mock its smart
 ' With life's old relish—Caroline's lorn broken heart!

CXXIV.

' Gloat,—gloat thy fill upon each torturous pang!
 ' Dost shrink?—Courage!—they were her dying moans!
 ' The music thickens:—'tis the sabres' clang
 ' Mingles with shrieks;—and, now, a peal of groans
 ' Comes up from Peterloo! What, though the stones
 ' Would rise and curse—were thy vile image there?—
 ' Thou shalt have joy in listening to the tones,
 ' Renewed in Hell, of Hunger's loud despair!—
 ' Hark! what wild choir breaks forth in anthem debopair?

CXXV.

' Behold—thy Radiant angel hath called up
 ' Thy bread-taxed victims, in their lank array;
 ' And, with the hunger-bitten weavers' troop,
 ' Thy fatherland's crushed children leave decay!
 ' All rise—and hymn thy glorious deed at Cray!—
 Hell-Fiend, avaunt!—

And, forth, the minion fled—
 Shrieking with horrid madness! Me, dismay
 And terror woke; and, from soul-quelling dread
 Set free, I blessed the morn, upon my prison-bed.

NOTES TO BOOK THE THIRD.

(1) Stanza 51.—“ ’Twas in my manhood’s youth,—he proudly said ;”—
Mine is but a poetical version of the suicide statesman’s vision : here follows the prose—from Winslow’s ‘ *Anatomy of Suicide* ’ (published 1840) pp. 242-4.—“ It is now more than thirty-five years ago that the following singular circumstance occurred to the Marquis of Londonderry : He was on a visit to a gentleman in the north of Ireland. The mansion was such a one as spectres are fabled to inhabit. The apartment, also, which was appropriated to his lordship, was calculated to foster such a tone of feeling from its antique character ; from the dark and richly-carved panels of its wainscot ; from its yawning chimney, looking like the entrance to a tomb ; from the portraits of grim men and women arrayed in orderly procession along the walls, and scowling a contemptuous enmity against the degenerate invader of their gloomy bowers and venerable halls ; and from the vast, dusky, ponderous, and complicated draperies that concealed the windows, and hung with the gloomy grandeur of funeral trappings about the hearse-like piece of furniture that was destined for his bed. Lord Londonderry examined his chamber ; he made himself acquainted with the forms and faces of the ancient possessors of the mansion as they sat upright in the ebony frames to receive his salutation ; and then, after dismissing his valet, he retired to bed. His candle had not long been extinguished, when he perceived a light gleaming on the draperies of the lofty canopy over his head. Conscious that there was no fire in his grate ; that the curtains were closed ; that the chamber had been in perfect darkness but a few minutes previously, he supposed that some intruder must have entered into his apartment ; and, turning round hastily to the side from whence the light proceeded, he, to his infinite astonishment, saw not the form of any human visitor, but the figure of a fair boy surrounded by a halo of glory. The spirit stood at some distance from his bed. Certain that his own faculties were not deceiving him, but suspecting he might be imposed on by the ingenuity of some of the numerous guests who were then inmates of the castle, Lord Londonderry advanced towards the figure ; it retreated before him ; as he advanced the apparition retired, until it entered the gloomy arch of the capacious chimney, and then sunk into the earth. Lord Londonderry returned to his bed, but not to rest ; his mind was harassed by the consideration of the extraordinary event which had occurred to him. Was it real, or the effect of an excited imagination ? The mystery was not so easily solved.

"He resolved in the morning to make no allusion to what had occurred the previous night, until he had watched carefully the faces of all the family, to discover whether any deception had been practised. When the guests assembled at breakfast, his lordship searched in vain for those latent smiles, those conscious looks, that silent communication between parties, by which the authors and abettors of such domestic conspiracies are generally betrayed. Everything apparently proceeded in its ordinary course; the conversation was animated and uninterrupted, and no indication was given that any one present had been engaged in the trick. At last, the hero of the tale found himself compelled to narrate the singular event of the preceding night. He related every particular connected with the appearance of the spectre. It excited much interest among the auditors, and various were the explanations offered. At last, the gentleman who owned the castle interrupted the various surmises by observing that "the circumstance which had just been recounted must naturally appear very extraordinary to those who had not been inmates long at the castle, and were not conversant with the legends of his family;" then, turning to Lord Londonderry, he said, "You have seen the Radiant Boy. Be content; it is an omen of prosperous fortunes. I would rather that this subject should not again be mentioned."

"This was no doubt an hallucination of the senses. On another occasion, when in the House of Commons, Lord Castlereagh fancied he saw the same "Radiant Boy." Does not this fact establish that his lordship's senses were not always in a healthy condition. It is possible that when impelled to suicide he laboured under some mental delusion."

(2) Stanza 58.—Roderick, king of Connaught,—who, finally, surrendered his title of 'Lord of all Ireland,' to our Henry II.—seems, from Leland's account, to have been the last monarch of the ancient Irish race who held a national assembly at Tara: it is described as "a numerous and magnificent convention of the states, in which his grandeur and authority were so strikingly displayed, that the ancient honours of his country seemed to revive, at the very moment when all such expectations were on the point of being utterly extinguished."

(3) Stanza 118.—The love of the unfortunate and noble-minded Robert Emmett for the daughter of Curran, is well known to have been the cause of his delay to quit Ireland after the failure of the insurrection in which he was engaged; the delay, of course, led to his apprehension and death.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

I.

Welcome, sweet Robin !—welcome, cheerful one !
Why dost thou slight the merry fields of corn,—
The sounds of human joy,—the plenty strown
From Autumn's teeming lap,—and, at gray morn,
Ere the sun wakes, sing to the things of scorn
And infamy and want and sadness whom
Their stronger fellow-criminals have torn
From freedom and the gladsome light of home—
To quench the nobler spark within, in dungeon'd gloom ?

II.

Why dost thou choose, throughout the live-long day,
A prison rampart for thy perch, and sing
As thou wouldst rend thy fragile throat ? Away !
My little friend, away, upon light wing,
A while,—beyond this house of suffering !
Away !—and I will watch for thy return,—
Thinking, meanwhile, how, by the silver spring
Mantled with golden lilies, thou dost turn
Thy pretty head awry, so meaningly, and yearn,

III.

From out that beaming look, to know what thoughts
Within the barb-leaved hart's-tongue dwell—
The purple eye petalled with snow, that floats
So gracefully :—dost think the damosel,
Young Hope, kirtled with Chastity, there fell
Into the stream, and grew a flower so fair ?
Ah ! still thou linger'st, while I, dreaming, tell
Of pleasures I would reap, if free I were,—
Like thee,—to breathe sweet Freedom's balmy air.

IV.

Away !—for this is not a clime for thee—
Sweet childhood's sacred one ! The hawthorns bend
With ruddy fruitage : tiny troops, with glee
Plundering the mellow wealth, a shout will send
Aloft, if they behold their feathered friend,
Loved ' Robin Redbreast,' mingle with their joy !
Did they not watch thy tenderlings, and wend
With eager steps, when school was o'er, a coy
And wistful peep to take—lest some rude ruffian boy,

V.

With sacrilegious heart and hand, should rob
Thy nest as heathenly as if ' Heaven's bird'
Were not more sacred than the vulgar mob
Of pies and crows ? Flee,—loved one !—thou hast heard
This dissonance of bolts and bars that gird
Old England's modern slaves, until thy sense
Of freedom's music will be sepulchred :—
Hie to yon jocund band of innocence,
And, 'mid their rapture, pour thy heart's mellifluence !

VI.

Still linger'st thou upon that dreary wall
Which bars, so enviously, my view of grove
And stream and hill,—as if it were death's pall?
O leave this tyrant-hold,—and, joyous rove—
Loved bird of Home,—Bird of our fathers' love,—
Where the thatched cottage, clad with late-blown rose
And sweet-brier and rosemary, thickly wove
With the dwarf-vine, its nectared garland shews
Unto the amorous bees that 'midst its sweets carouse.

VII.

Hasten, dear Robin!—for the aged dame
Calls thee to gather up the honeyed crumb
She scatters at her door; and, at thy name,
The youngsters crowd to see their favourite come.
Fear not Grimalkin!—she doth sing 'three-thrum,'
With happy half-shut eyes, upon the warm
Soft cushion in the corner-chair: deaf, dumb,
And toothless lies old Growler:—fear no harm,—
Loved Robin!—thou shalt banquet hold without alarm.

VIII.

Ah! Chanticleer hath eyed the dainties spread
For thee, and summons his pert train the prize
To share. Lo! how the children ask with dread,
Of the old grandame with the glazed eyes,
'Why Robin does not come?' The pet one cries,
Because he sees thee not,—unpacified,
Ev'n with the apple tinct with vermeil dyes,
The first-born offers with a kiss! Abide
Not here, expected one,—lest woe the cot betide!

IX.

If thou return not, Gammer o'er her pail
Will sing in sorrow, 'neath the brinded cow,—
And Gaffer sigh over his nut-brown ale,—
While evermore the petlings, with sad brow,
Will look for thee upon the holly bough—
Where thou didst chirp thy signal note, ere on
The lowly grunsel thou didst light, and shew,
With such sweet confidence,—thou darling one !—
Thy blythesome face,—and, on thee, all cried ' benison !'

X.

Alas!—I mind me why thou linger'st here :—
My country's happy cottages abound
No longer !—where they stood and smiled, uprear
The ' Bastile' and the gaol !—and thou hast found
Such refuge, Robin, as,—upon the ground
Where Alfred reigned, and Hampden fought and bled,—
Where Milton sung, and Latimer was crowned
With glorious martyrdom,—is portioned
Unto our fathers' sons—who win with tears their bread.

XI.

Bread !—nay devour with greed the grovelling root,
As recompense of labour for their lords ;—
Or, spurned, when begging to have, like the brute,
Fodder for toil, and coerced into hordes
Of midnight spoilers,—swell the black records
Of cruelty and crime. ' This dear dear land' (1)
Is dear no longer : its great name affords
Thoughts but for curses ! Aye, where the brave band
Sang in the flames—lit by the brood of Hildebrand ;—

XII.

Where strode the iron men of Runnymede,
And quelled the tyrant ;—where Hypocrisy
And Lawlessness, though sprung of royal seed
And sceptred, paid stern forfeit by decree
Of broad-day justice unto Liberty ;—
Where noblest deeds were done ; upon this isle—
' This precious stone set in the silver sea ' (2)
Men talk of England as of something vile ;
And wish they could forget her, in some far exile !

XIII.

The cottage babes were mourning, did I say,
For that the threshold their loved visitant
Presented not ? Alas, poor bird ! Thy lay
And all its sweetness is forgot : their want
Of bread hath banished thoughts of Robin's chaunt :
The children plenty know no more ; and Love
And Gentleness have fled from Hunger's haunt :—
Fled is all worship for fair things that rove
Among fair flowers—worship in young hearts sweetly wove.

XIV.

Fair Nature charms not : fellowship with song
And beauty,—germs from which grow, for the good
Reverence, and for the frail—though wrong—
Pity and tenderness :—all these, the rude
Chill breath of Want hath stifled in the bud ;
And beggar quarrels for their scanty crust
Now fill the bosoms of the lean, dwarfed brood,
The peasant father—sprung from sires robust—
Beholds at home, and wishes he were laid in dust !

XV.

Ah ! darling Robin,—thou wilt soon behold
 No homes for poor men on old England's shore :—
 No homes but the vile gaol, or viler fold
 Reared by new rule to herd the 'surplus poor'—
 Wise rule which unto Pauperism's foul core—
 The rich man's purse-plague's core—shall penetrate :
Paupers shall multiply their race no more
Except they live in palaces ! Debate
 Upon the rule they may : but,—the slaves bear their fate !

Slaves,—abject, bloodless, soulless, sneaking slaves !—
 Your fetters are perfected, now ! 'Tug, strain,
 Toil, sweat, and starve, and die !—For, whoso raves
 For larger pittance from his lords humane,—
 Or, malcontent, dares from hard toil refrain,—
 He shall be *Bastiled* ! His wise lords say well—
 Such grumbling slaves might nurture bold disdain
 In their serf-offspring : better 'tis to quell,
 At once, and, in the germ, creatures that might rebel !

XVII.

Cowards,—why did ye suffer knaves to forge
 These eunuch-fetters,—and to bind them on
 Your limbs ?—

Beshrew this rising in my gorge
 To think that others 'neath their fetters groan,
 And do not break them !—Wear I not my own ?
 Aye,—and *must* wear them, while my tyrants choose.
 Well : let me bide my time ; and, then, atone
 For that *real* crime—the failing to arouse
 Slaves against tyrants :—I may,—yet,—before life's close.—

XVIII.

The sun has faded. Robin,—'tis full time
Thou fledd'st to covert : cease thy song, and hie
Away to rest !—but let me hear thy chime
Renewed to-morrow,—for Home's minstrelsy
Is precious 'mid these bars. Robin,—good-bye :—
'Twas Childhood's farewell ; and I cannot yield
This heart to bitterness so utterly,
But that the sense of fondness, now uphealed
Therein, will struggle till its pulses be revealed.

XIX.

Once more resounds the hateful clank of bars
And bolts : once more I gain my narrow lair.
Of bondage-life new-fangledness ne'er mars
The drear perfection : Morrow is the heir
Legitimate of dull To-day ; and where
Yesterday gazed upon the chill damp wall
And yawned, To-day looks on with the same air
Of listlessness. Food, sight, sound, converse pall
Only the fountains of the dead well spiritual

XX.

Waters that purify the stagnant mind
From morbid loathings that would madness breed,
Amid this sickening slough of unrefined
And vulgar circumstance. —
My spirit, freed
From matter, seemed on enterprise to speed,
Once more, across Death's gloomful ocean wave ;
And raught the shore where penance is decreed
To souls forsaking, with presumption brave,
Their clay ere Nature's sentence lays it in the grave.

XXI.

The sculptured aisle—the dome—were quickly gained,
And past. And now, a feeling and a sense,—
Or, what were likest sense and feeling,—reigned
Throughout my being of a power intense
To summon up the soul's experience,
And view, as in a mirror, her whole course
Of consciousness : filled with this affluence
Of intellective might, unto each source
Of mortal joy the mind recurred, with mystic force.

XXII.

Her reminiscence seemed so full and clear,
And she so bright verisimilitude
Pictured of joys bygone,—that Hades' sphere
Forgot to frown,—and the dread clime seemed hued
Like vernal earth. Childhood's sweet fields renewed,
With daisies and with king-cups gay begemmed,
I saw : then Lindsey's sweetest sanctitude
Of Druid woods arose, where, giant-stemmed,
Upreared old trees anew with verdure diademmed.

XXIII.

Cirqued with his offspring stood the central oak
Of myriad years,—throwing each glorious bough
Abroad as bravely as when music broke
The solitudes while there his parent grew,—
And ' derry-down ! ' was sung,—and mistletoe
Was gathered by the bearded hierophant,—
And troops of primal men their eagled foe
Fierce staggered,—chased the bison to his haunt,—
And slew, in his own den, the wolf so grim and gaunt.

XXIV.

Along mazed paths beloved of those old trees
I seemed to walk 'mong flowers all faery-frail,—
Azure-robed harebells, chaste anemones,
Primroses wan, and lilies of the vale,—
Each bud so beauteous that speech would fail
To say how lovely 'twas :—for, gushing tears
Of ecstasy can only tell the tale,
Unto some kindred heart that Nature cheers
As rapturously,—how fair are flowers of childhood's years !

XXV.

And melody awoke of sweet wood-lark
And mellow-throated blackbird,—sibilance
Of thousand tiny things, each like a spark
Of gold or emerald, its radiance
Amid the noonbeam sporting,—utterance
Of love's soft throbbings by the stockdove coy,—
Shrill minstrelsy of throistles,—puissance
Of sylvan harmonies with flood of joy
The heart seeming to deluge, and its sense o'erclay.

XXVI.

And still the land was Hades,—and the soul
Lived consciously discerpt from her clay shrine,
And viewed through plenitude of her control
Over the past, in mirror chrystalline,
Life's joys,—nay seemed her essence to entwine
With them until again she lived them o'er.—
The harping of an unseen hand divine
Now woke carols of courtly troubadour—
Till the old forest echoed with proud songs of yore :—

XXVII.

Lays that with fluttering bosom many a maid
Of southern clime oft listed from some high
And envious turret,—rapturous serenade
Of glowing love, mingled with bitter sigh
And passionate upbraiding, breathed to die
Upon the breeze. Anon a strain upsent
That unseen harp, shrill as when cleaves the sky
The battle-trumpet : gorgeous tournament
The harper sang,—and shock of knights armipotent :

XXVIII.

Of prancing steeds, and terrible *melée*,
And dancing plumes, he told : of high proclaim
By pageant herald,—victor-garland gay
Bestowed with peerless blush of maiden shame,—
Revealing peerless maiden's conscious flame,—
And honours by spectator kings conferred,—
And royal mandate that the conqueror's fame
Be borne through Christendom,—yea, to the beard
Of the swart Soldan, 'mid his sweltering turbanned herd :

XXIX.

A stately burthen, couched in antique tongue
And magic rhyme, unto his mystic shell
With tuneful voice, the unseen minstrel sung.
But, suddenly, his lofty harpings fell
To dirge-like melody,—for smit by spell
Of memory, the bard his fated toil
On earth,—his breath of hope hushed by the knell
Of early death, sung sadly. Dull recoil
His harp seized, next,—as if it shrunk from overtoil.

XXX.

The sorrow-broken songster, soon, to wake
Its chords in wailful cavatina strove :—
He sung of the proud, slighted bosom's ache,—
Of soul-consuming fires more fierce than love
Or jealousy,—of restless hopes that move
Their young possessor to aspirings wild,—
Of disappointment's gall when frowns disprove
His smiling day-dreams,—till the draught defiled—
The deathly chalice—tempts the scorn-stung Poet-child !

XXXI.

Sobblings, that heaved as they would rend the heart,
Succeeded,—and the lyre was dumb ! Then passed
The shade of fated Chatterton athwart
My path,—sad, mournful, slow, with eyes downcast,
And visage ye might emblem by a waste
Of over-prurience, or tropic field
Where luscious fruitage springing thick and fast
Expires of hasty ripeness, ere can yield
To th' taste its sweets, or their rich value be revealed.—→

XXXII.

The shade evanished from my eager gaze,—
Seeking, with haste of heart-galled misanthrope,
Some dark secluded nook of forest-maze,
And, now, came o'er my spirit a grim troop
Of self-accusing thoughts,—swift summoned up
By Memory, who, again, with mystic might
Seemed high endowed. How oft, in youth, the dupe
I, also, was, of dreams,—and misused flight
Of years,—she sternly pictured to my humbled sight.

XXXIII.

To manhood,—reached before the dreams of youth
Were half-relinquished,—passed my bodiless
Being, and seemed to sigh, where oft, in truth,
The waking heart had sighed, deep blamefulness
Of indolence beholding,—pride's excess,—
And thousand errors although inly mourned
Still followed. Then a look of tenderness
Was pictured, telling how one bosom yearned
To bless me, as if still the soul on earth sojourned.—

XXXIV.

Anon, a change came o'er my dream. Disposed
In stately length, a twilight avenue
Of trees funebrous suddenly disclosed
I saw,—where the tall cypress, ancient yew,
Dark pine, and spreading cedar,—as by due
Observance of nice art, like colonnade
Of desert Tadmor, were arranged, and grew
A solemn vista clothed with musing shade—
Such as the rapt soul's holiest retrospect might aid.

XXXV.

A monumental form, that meekly glowed
With softest radiance, sadly o'er an urn
Sepulchral, 'neath a lofty cypress, bowed,
Midway, along this sombrous pathway. Lorn
It droop'd, and, voiceless, seemed to tell 'I mourn
'With more than mortal grief;' yet, was such grace
Celestial by that drooping statue worn,—
That one desired for ever in that place
To stay and gaze upon its spiritual face.

XXXVI.

Enrapt to ecstasy, I gazed till life
Began to fill its breast, and passion shone
Through its unmarbled eyes ! Death a vain strife
Essayed, with chilly grasp around her zone,
To hold in sculptured grief that ardent one.
Lo ! high, immortal Love breathed vital power
On her fair limbs,—and, with a gentle moan,
She raised her head—a monument no more
Of sorrow—but, for love, a peerless cynosure !

XXXVII.

Her islet shell the burning Lesbian took
From sad repose upon the urn that feigned
To hold the image of her grief, and strook
The matchless chords as one who pain disdained :
Then, proudly, though with tears, she thus complained
Of slighted tenderness,—vowing to feed
Her fruitless flame till, spirit disenchained
From torture, her deep constancy its meed
Should find in some blest state for souls by gods decreed :—

XXXVIII.

Phaon ! beloved, unloving Phaon ! thee
The maid enamoured hymns,— by pain unchanged
In Hades, as by scorn on earth : on me
Let angry Jove, the Torturer, be avenged
For slighted life, and order disarranged
Of his stern government : woe shall not wrest
Thy image from its throne : never estranged
Shall be her love from Sappho's faithful breast :
She can love on—unloved, despised, ache-doomed, unblest !

XXXIX.

Ingrate ! I offered thee no vulgar toy,—
No mindless, soulless prize :—hadst thou my flame
Returned, the passion of a thoughtless boy,
Compared with mine, were like the lustre tame
Of night's pale worm shewn to the sun-lit gem.
Cold, undiscerning clay,—thou wast not worth
My love ! Alas ! each winged reproach I aim
At thee back on my soul recoils with birth
Of fond remorse more torturous than woes of earth.

XL.

Phaon beloved !—unloving though thou wert,
My love burns on, and shall, all pain survive—
A deathless flame : my soul lives all-amort
By her own nature,—since she doth derive
Her essence from intenseness, nor can live
An atom of her life in meek, cold, calm
Indifference. Mystic hopes that in me strive
For utterance !—do ye truly shape the palm
I claim,—or doth sick Fancy feign the spirit's balm ?

XLI.

Fidelity to Nature's impulses
Shall bring, at length, ineffable reward :
They who, all unsubdued, 'gainst miseries
Of human scorn and death and woe have warred
Shall meet their guerdon : dreams of gifted bard
And visions of gray seer shall be fulfilled :
Torture that long the universe hath marred,
Shall end : of Love and Hate the combat wild
Shall cease : the discords of the soul for aye be stilled.

XLII.

It cannot be that with the Beautiful
 Deformity shall ever, envions, blend :
 Mercy divine, shall demon Wrath annul,
 Love conquer Hate,—and glorious Goodness bend
 Her iris over life till it transcend
 The power of Evil, and annihilate
 Its sting for ever !—

Ardent Lesbian, end

Thy dreams,—nor dare Futurity and Fate
 To fix, by thy fond wish, in fancied happy state !—

XLIII.

Thus broke upon my spirit accents stern,
 Haughty, abrupt ;—and, forthwith, stood beside
 Sappho's soft form a spirit cold and durn
 Of aspect, but whose stately, seemly pride
 Outspoke the tuneful Roman suicide
 Who wooed the Muse to leave her wonted hill,
 And tread the plain with philosophic stride,—
 And, slighting toys, with manly themes to fill
 The soul—of its own Liberty, Fate, Good, and Ill.(³)

XLIV.

Dispel these sanguine dreams !—the proud bard said :—
 Passion,—warm maid,—hath seized the heritage
 Of Reason in thee : proof hath Nature spread
 That strong Necessity rules wide expanse
 Of Universe : primeval atoms Chance
 May have assorted,—but, once joined, 'tis vain
 To dream a separation. Partial glance
 On Nature renders thy warm essence fain
 To witness un-mixed Good begin its ceaseless reign :

XLV.

But, know—the Universe is perfect, since
 Eternal Destiny forbade all germs
 Diverse from what exist. Let it convince
 Short-sighted murmurers at the mingled forms
 Of being—that all which is—is best, though storms
 And darkness, death and havoc, mix with peace
 And radiance, life and love,—since each conforms
 To high Necessity. Let passion cease,
 Lesbian,—to dazzle thee with fraudulent garishness.—

XLVI.

So spake Lucretius; but, with look undimmed
 Of intellectual ardour, Sappho thus
 Rethemed her yearning thought:—
Guesses sublimed
 By doubt, rather than argument abstruse
 And wise, thou utter'st, O incredulous
 Epicurean! Failing to foreknow
 The future, and with haste incurious
 Glancing at past and present, thou art slow
 To mark how Nature doth her bright intents foreshow.

XLVII.

Weakly,—not wisely,—Mind doth refuge take
 In greater mystery from less: though faith
 In government of kindly gods forsake
 The soul full oft, beholding pain and death
 Of fairest things endowed with lease of breath,—
 Yet seems it blind procedure to conclude
 Our puzzled survey with a word that saith
 The gods are helpless as ourselves, and feud
 Of Good with Evil hath by law of Fate ensued:—

XLVIII.

Fate, or Necessity : Bard,—what is this
 But Ign'rance veiled in simulance of words ?
 Nature's strange strife must be—because it is ;
 Or, is—because it must be : dull discords
 Of Reason ! If its help, indeed, affords
 No sager explications of the cause
 Of things, my soul its sterile rules discards
 And cleaves to Phantasy—from which she draws
 Faith more ennobling to interpret Nature's laws.

XLIX.

The soul loathes Pain, Deformity, Decay :
 Nature hath made them loathsome to her sense :
 Therefore,—they shall not always be. Bard,—say,
 What proves this truthless ? Wordy eloquence
 Of doubt compriseth all the proof from whence
 Thou dost affirm Necessity ; and why
 Should spirits slight the cheering evidence
 Of their own sympathies with Nature's high
 Proclaim—to embrace clouds of dull dubiety ?—

L.

The sanguine Lesbian ceased,—and thus replied
 The philosophic bard :—

Couldst thou efface

My doubts,—rapt, tuneful one,—to list thee chide
 With this sweet earnestness and winning grace (4)
 Long season would I yield. A resting-place
 My spirit yearns to find within the veil
 Of Truth—but yearns in vain. We still but chase
 Shadows, and evermore the substance fail
 To find, of Truth : our clearest light is mystical.

LI.

Deformity and discord war with fair
And lovely shapes throughout the universe :—
What wonder, then, if gifted spirits share
This wishful trust—that Good shall Ill disperse
Victorious, yet ? I own, 'tis not through fierce
Impetuous desire,—but by innate
Devotion to the Beautiful—to hearse
All pain in joy,—woe, wrong to ' annihilate—
Thy essence, Lesbian, builds this happy after-state :

LII.

It is the native yearning of the Mind :
The soul attuned to harmony and love
Longs from the chains of discord to unbind
All thought and being. Yet, I view, enwove
Through Nature, laws by which all things commove
Despite our choice, misnamed,—or joy or woe
Of sentient creatures : laws it doth behove
High Powers to conserve, lest men below,
Judging them null, should cease within their fanes to bow.

LIII.

Or, if uncaused the Universe exists,—
Mystery beyond the plummet of our thought !—
Who, then, shall spere the dark eternal mists
That veil all being ?—who break the irksome knot
With which Necessity binds fast the lot
Of every sensuous thing—exposed to death,
And pain, and hate ?—who cancel the huge blot
Of suffering from life ? The shadow fleeth
Of Truth ! Spirits,—we wander in a mystic path !

LIV.

How know we whether it be fair and good
And godlike to desire plenipotence
Of love, whereby to pour a bounteous flood
Upon the universe, and fill all sense
And thought with joy,—or, whether vehemence
Of folly be the fitter name whereby
To note our wish? Unknowing indigence,—
With all our toil,—beggars the soul : we try
In vain to grasp Truth's substance : all is phantasy !

LV.

If it were fair and good to bless all thought
And life with joy, why was not Nature clad
In never-changing smiles from birth ?—why fraught
For ages thus, her life with suffering sad,—
With pain and agony ? Will Evil add,—
By mystic providence,—unto the sum
Of everlasting Good ? What rapture glad
Would fill the soul,—what blest delirium
Of joy,—could she burst through the veil that hides her doom !

LVI.

But all is doubt, and dark : we struggle on
Like limed birds,—still captive,—but the strife
Maintain, in trust that freedom shall be won :
How vain may prove our trust ! Spirits,—what if
Our ignorance have misnamed the hues of Life—
Evil and Good ? From whence, then, shall we earn
Knowledge to unknow our strange errors ? Rise
With mystery all—all appears ;—and yearn
For ever, vainly, may the soul pure Truth to learn !——

LVII.

Lucretius ceased : and dark debate and doubt
Brooded on brows of many a habitant
Of that strange clime who now, in wondering rout
Listed the theme.—

Spiritual pursuivant
Or herald ghost, meanwhile, with ministrant
Aspect approached,—and him thus greet the crowd :—
Hail bard who didst the world-waged victory chaunt
Of Cæsar and Pharsalia ! message-browed
Thy visage seems :—we listen :—thy full thoughts unshroud !—

LVIII.

High-gifted spirits of self-exiled land,—
Replied the soul of Lucan ;—Minds that erst
On earth caught inspiration from the grand
And beautiful in Nature, and conversed
With her Divinity until she nursed
Within ye thoughts and forms of glorious might
And loveliness,—which in their fulness burst
Upon the world suffusing Man with bright
Ecstatic visions of the reign of Truth and Right,—

LIX.

I come with embassy from high divan
Of spirits who on earth held sceptred sway
Or civic honour. Deep debate began
Their essences, of late, if throned-array
And poms, in Hades, ceaseless state pourtray
Of monarchy on earth,—or phantoms build
Their regal seats, and mythic shapes display
Lessons of change, that dynasts unbeguiled
May be of pride which hath, perchance, their souls defiled :

LX.

Exalted Hellene spirits challenge proof
 Of natural kingship,—while a haughty host
 Of Thrones contend, beneath cerulean roof,
 For ceaseless rule of princes. To their coast
 The court of sceptred suicides each ghost
 Invite of your harmonious throng, that sage
 And bard the quest may aid which long hath tossed
 Hades in doubt, and blissful heritage
 Of Truth spirits may win. Ye have my embassy.——

LXI.

We come,—we come !—with rapturous minstrelsy
 Of many a mystic harp the Poet-choir
 Respond :—we come to join the jubilee
 Of thought ! The true-born children of the lyre
 High emprise of the soul can never tire.
 To guage the depths of doubt,—the heights to scale
 Of phantasy,—the strength of passion's fire
 To prove,—to labour on, though footsteps fail
 Of Mind in Mystery's path,—our essence shall not quail !

LXII.

To dare to think—our rightful attribute
 We claim. What though we vainly thread the maze
 Of thought ? Ours be the banquet of dispute,—
 The feast of argument :—and if the ways
 Of dark Necessity still shun our gaze—
 Better in vain to search, than pine and irk
 In low ignoble sloth !——

Receding rays

Shed the rapt choir ;—and, left in vision mirk,
 Slowly crept back unto her clay the ' vital spark.'

NOTES TO BOOK THE FOURTH.

(1) and (2) stanzas 11 and 12.—“This dear dear land,” &c.—Dying speech of Gaunt.—Shakspeare, Rich. II. Act 2.

(3) Stanza 43.—In an age when all metaphysical poetry is deemed dull and stupid, it would not be easy to create curiosity respecting the contents of the superb poem on “The Nature of Things,” by Lucretius. Readers of the Latin classics usually regard it as valuable, chiefly for its masterly embodiment of the principles of the Epicurean philosophy; but Dr. Mason Good, (whose splendidly-annotated version, I have seen, for the first time, in the British Museum Library, since liberation), opens his preface with this glowing, and more universal, eulogy of the Roman philosopher-poet:—

“There is no poem within the circle of the ancient classics, more entitled to attention, than “The Nature of Things,” by Titus Lucretius Carus. It unfolds to us the rudiments of that philosophy, which, under the plastic hands of Gassendi and Newton, has, at length, obtained an eternal triumph over every other hypothesis of the Grecian schools; it is composed in language the most captivating and perspicuous that can result from an equal combination of simplicity and polish, is adorned with episodes the most elegant and impressive, and illustrated by all the treasures of natural history. It is the Pierian spring from which Virgil drew his happiest draughts of inspiration; and constitutes, in point of time, as of excellence, the first didactic poem of antiquity.”

(4) Stanza 50.—“Sweet earnestness and winning grace.” I entreat the reader to understand these phrases as an ascription to Sappho’s real power as a poetess,—not as characteristic of the manner in which I have

made her apparition discourse. Ancient and modern critics without number—Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Horace himself, Vossius, Hoffman, Addison, &c., &c., have paid the highest tribute to the poetical excellence of the fair suicide of Lesbos; but, perhaps, a more finished and eloquent eulogy on her lyric worth is not to be found in the compass of a few words, than the following extract from the 9th vol. of the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana* :—

“ There are few intellectual treasures, the loss of which is more deeply to be regretted than that of the works of this poetess; for the remnants which have reached us certainly display genius of the highest order; they are rich even to exuberance, and yet directed by the most exquisite taste. In these most delicious of love-songs the tide of passion seems deep and exhaustless; it flows rapidly yet gently on, while the most sparkling fancy is ever playing over it; and the words themselves seem to participate in the sentiments which they develope. It is a mistake to imagine that the fragments of Sappho are nothing more than the eloquent expressions of amatory feeling; they are really verses of high imagination, which renders them as beautiful as they are intense, and, in the opinion of some writers, raises them even to the sublime.”

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

I.

Hail eldest Night! Mother of human fear!
Vague solitude where infant Man first felt
His native helplessness! Beneath whose drear
And solemn coverture he, trembling, knelt
To what in thy vast womb of darkness dwelt
Unseen, unknown!—but, with the waking Sun,
Shouting, sprang up to see glad Nature melt
In smiles,—triumphantly his Joy-God run
Up the blue sky,—and Light's bright reign again begun!

II.

Hail starless darkness!—sterile silence hail!
Would that o'er Chaos thy wide rule had been
Perpetual, and reptile Man's birth-wail
Had ne'er been heard,—or, over huge, obscene,
And monstrous births of ocean or terrene
For ever thou hadst brooded,—so that Light
Had ne'er mocked mortals, nor the morning sheen
Broke thy stern sigil to give baleful sight
To Man—whose look upon his fellow is a blight!

III.

Season of sepulchred and secret sin !
Beneath thy pall what vileness doth Man hide,
From age to age,—the moral Harlequin
Who dons the saint to play the fratricide.
Villainy's jubilee !—Crime's revel-tide !—
Whose murky archives opened would proclaim
Yon ermined judge a gold-bought homicide,—
Yon priest an atheist,—and hold up to shame
Myriads of knaves writ ' honest ' in the roll of Fame !

IV.

Mute witness of frail beauty's primal wreck !
Carnival hour of gray-haired Lechery !—
Foul harvest-time of her who sits to beck
O'er her cursed threshold yon boy-debauchee,—
The bawd, all palsy-twitched, whose mockery
Of mirth, when he beholds her on the morrow,
With sobered brain, will freeze his jollity
To speechless horror,—till he fain would borrow
Thy veil, once more, to hide his young remorseful sorrow !

V.

High noon of the adulterer who doth ask
Of yawning hell to triple thy black hour,
That he, unshooned, may safely, 'neath thy mask,
Reach the unfastened, guilt-frequented door,
And steep his soul in sin unto the core !
Mirth-bringer to the thief grown hunger-fell,—
Who laughs to clutch the miser's coffered store,
And, rendered shrewd by law, with smothered yell,
Sends the rich shrivelled fool where he no tales can tell !

VI.

Thou great conspirator with men of blood
To curtain murder till the guilty proof
In some lone cave or unfrequented wood,—
From man's short-sighted vigilance aloof,—
Can be earth'd up ! Oh ! if the ebony woof
Thou stretchest o'er the land could be transformed
Into a mirror,—how the general scoff
Would rise at portraitures beheld deformed
And hideous, that had hitherto their votaries charmed !

VII.

At base pretensions unto comely worth,—
At foul Hypocrisy's true features shewn,—
How would the universal curse burst forth !—
Hah ! how I doat ! Am I an idiot grown
In the dank dungeon ? Is not the World known
Unto Itself to be a stage of cheats,—
Where, whoso plays with skill,—if he depone
That each sworn brother-knave's deceits
Are fair,—the skilful knave a world-voiced plaudit greets ?

VIII.

And, were thy pall, dim Night, asunder torn,—
And ugliest portraits thou conceal'st laid bare,—
For worship men would soon exchange their scorn.
With flagrant front do not Day's vices glare,—
And men that they are virtues sleekly swear ?
Darkness ! still hold thy provident control
O'er half man's life,—that some thy cloak may wear
To sin with shame : more seemly 'tis than stole
Of sanctity that hides, by day, the filthy soul.

Darkness ! thy sceptre still maintain,—for thou
Some scanty sleep to England's slaves dost bring :
Leicester's starved stockingers their misery now
Forget ; and Manchester's pale tenderling,—
The famished factory-child,—its suffering
A while exchangeth for a pleasant dream !—
Dream on, poor infant wretch ! Mammon may wring
From out thy tender heart, at the first gleam
Of light, the life-drop, and exhaust its feeble stream !

X.

Darkness !—still rule—that the Lancastrian hive
Of starveling slaves may bless thee :—for ev'n they—
With all their wretchedness—desire to live !—
Aye, *men* desire to live—to whom the day
Will bring again their woman's-task—to stay
At squalid home, and play the babe's meek nurse
Till sound of factory-bell—when they away
Must haste, and hold the suckling to life's source—
Within the rails ! Upon their tyrants be my curse !

XI.

Nay, rather light that curse on ye, yourselves,—
Ye timid, crouching crew ! Is there no heart
Among ye stung to see the puny elves,
His children, daily die ;—his wife dispart
Her hair, and glare in madness ? Doth the smart
Of degradation cease to rankle in your veins ?
Faint, though ye be, and feeble,—will none start
Unto his feet, and cry, while aught remains
In him of life—' Death ! or deliverance from our chains' ?

XII.

Cowards!—do ye believe all men are like
Yourselves?—that craven fear doth paralyze
Each English arm until it dares not strike,
A tyrant?—that no voice could exorcize
Old Tyler's spirit,—and impel to rise
Millions omnipotent in vengeful ire?—
Fool—that I am!—are there not hungry spies
On every hand,—who watch, for dirty hire,
Each glance of every eye that glows with Freedom's fire?—

XIII.

Frost! while I rave in darkness, thou dost feel
The sun in yon far southern felon-land,—
But feel'st, therewith, thy chain. Thy wound to heal
No help extends! Poor victim!—sold, trepanned
By hirelings of the minion whose spite planned
Thy death, and built thy gallows,—but, through fear
Of Labour's vengeance, stayed the hangman's hand;
Victim of thy heart's thirst with bread to cheer
England's lean artizan, and Cambria's mountaineer! (1)

XIV.

How many a despicable sordid tool
Of tyranny doth flippantly descant
Upon thy deed,—cleping thee 'rebel fool,'
And gallant Shell a 'broil-slain miscreant,'—
Who,—had your cause and ye proved dominant,—
Would loudly have extolled your fearlessness,
And boisterously swelled the choral chaunt
Filled with the eulogy of your excess
Of deep fraternal zeal to end Man's wretchedness! (2)

XV.

Ellis,—my brother!—though but once in life
I clasped thy hand,—for one hour's troubled breath
Heard thy tongue's accents,—in the dungeon rife
With sounds of maddened sorrow,—yet, till death
Hearse me in silence, of my plighted faith
To thee as to a brother, I will think :—
And never,—though it bring me direst wrath,—
That they have wronged thy innocence, will I shrink
To tell the oppressors whose revenge-cup thou dost drink.

XVI.

A perjurer sold thee to the lordling's spite,—
The lordling's tenant-serfs dared not demur
The verdict—for they marked his nod, though slight !—
How sternly starless did the dread night lour
On the low minions of tyrannic power
When they, to exile thee,—the wronged one,—led !
'Twas such a night as this ; and grief's heart-shower
These yielding eyes, in my lone dungeon, shed——
For, 'mid the clank of chains, echoed thy farewell tread !

XVII.

And thou, all guiltless of the violent deed
Wherewith they charged thee, as the new-born child !⁽³⁾—
And he, failing t' entwine the victor's meed
With patriotic daring,—deep-despoiled,
Alike, of the sweet heaven that on ye smiled
In your young loveling's eyes,—your *widows* frowned
Upon by the rude world,—scorn on scorn piled
Upon your memories, by each hireling, bound
To fawn or bark as he is bid,—like the vile hound !—

XVIII.

Despoiled,—perchance, for ever,—of the sweets
Of love, peace, hope !—Oh, how your hapless fates,—
Like fearful beacons that the mariner meets
Voyaging near whirlpools,—tell what danger waits
The patriot's steps ! And, whosoe'er debates,
Within, of loss of ease, enjoyment, wealth ;—
Or, who on circling perils ruminates,—
Envied, maligned, belied, bereft of health,—
Belike of food,—dogged by blood-scenting things of stealth ;—

XIX.

Whoso bethinks him that the eager grasp
Of foremost friendship's semblance may denote
The deeper venom of the darkling asp,—
And that the multitude's applausive shout
May be the prelude to their hate ;—if doubt
And hesitance arrest his fervid pulse,
And cool it to consistence with due thought
For his own offspring ;—if their prattlings dulce
Seduce him from resolves that do the soul convulse

XX.

With troubles, contests, perils myriadfold,
And threatening prospect of a baleful end
By the vile halter,—in the dungeon cold,—
Or on the transport-shore without a friend
To sympathise, but hordes of slaves to rend,
Ev'n in its death-pangs, the lorn exile's breast,
With brutal taunts :—Oh ! let him reprehend
That knoweth none of these,—but here confest,
Shall stand my sentence,—while I am a dungeon-guest.

XXI.

I reprehend him not, that wisely looks
Before he leaps,—and looks again !—

Poor slaves !

Forgive that hasty curse !—forgive ! Rebukes
From me ye little need, while the rude waves
Of suffering overwhelm ye ! Seek your graves
In peace ! for ye are hasting thitherward
Apace. Why should ye a vain strife 'gainst knaves
And tyrants struggle to maintain ? Reward
Ye would have none : Redemption's hope for *you* is barred !

XXII.

Drudge on in peace !—Aye, though ye starve, still drudge—
Lest from your fondlings ye be torn, to herd
With eunuch-paupers ! Tyrants wreck their grudge
Not as of old : high lords then massacred
The scurvy slaves who insolently dared
To murmur : now they wisely take revenge
On murmurers like men who have conferred
With meek Philosophy,—and mildly change
Murder of breathing things for 'annihilation strange

XXIII.

Of things *designed*,—as they believe,—to breathe ;—
And, if they do not thus believe, they lie—
The atheistic hypocrites ! To sheathe
The sword in ye were barb'rous : ye can die
Humanely slow ; and they can nullify
Your race, peacefully ! 'Tis the radiant dawn
Of Christian Civilization ! Purify
The earth they must by sweeping off your spawn—
Ev'n as the sun sweeps noxious vapours from the lawn !

XXIV.

Drudge on, in silent meekness ! Tamely drag
Life's fardels as ye may :—'twill soon be spent—
This loan of breath ;—and they will find some rag
To wrap ye in at last ! When ye are blent
With other church-yard things—from riches rent
And pride—ye will be even with them ! † Pine
A few more hours ! Your goodly tenement,
The grave, is near :—that fair serene confine
Where ye will never hunger while your lordlings dine !——

XXV.

Hark ! 'tis Consumption's hollow cough that rings
From yon damp felon-cell ! How dread these vaults
Of living Death seem 'mid such echoings
At midnight ! What strange doubt the soul assaults,—
What frightful bodings !—till the heart's pulse halts,
As if it were afraid to beat so loud !—
Let me to rest ! To-morrow, when the bolts
Are drawn, once more,—this feeling of the shroud
May flee : the spirit be, again, with hope endowed :—

XXVI.

With hope for Man's redemption,—though a crime
It is for prison-thralls of such a hope
To breathe !—

I slept, and saw, again, the clime
Of suicidal souls. One of a troop
Of travellers newly come, beneath the cope
Sepulchral of the vague, vast, caverned span
I stood. Anon, adown an aisle whose slope
Invited, on new travel, I began
To wend, forth from that region subterranean.

XXVII.

Upon a bleak and barren plain, I dreamed
That I emerged,—where one tall pillar reared
Its height until among the clouds it seemed
To end. Yet, 'twas but mockery when I neared
This lofty wonder—for its top appeared
Beneath man's stature. Low, around the base,
Lay broken sculptures of great names revered
In times of old ; but ruin did deface
Them till they looked like Memory in her burial-place.

XXVIII.

And then another, and another stone
Uprose, in the far distance,—each the aim
Vain-glorious of its founders making known
More by its wreck than record of the name
Or deed it had been stablished to proclaim.
Food for despondence, thus, the brooding mind
Gathered with semblant shapes that fleeting came
Athwart its vision :—for, as flits the wind,
These imaged columns fled,—or with new forms combined.

XXIX.

In allegoric lessons for the soul—
Of Liberty, each marble fragment strewed
Upon that plain, each pictured deed and scroll,
Told, as it lay in ruined pulchritude,—
' She is a goddess Man hath oft pursued,—
' Won seldom,—and hath never yet retained
' Her living presence !' Dreary solitude
O'er all I saw in saddened vision reigned,—
Until a verdant mound my anxious spirit gained.

XXX.

And, on the mound, methought a mystic cirque
Of giant stones, in simple grandeur rose,—
Resembling Earth's first fathers' handy-work,—
Their temples, or their tombs. Of Freedom's cause,—
When Gallia's sons bound laurel on their brows
Blent with the oak,—full many a devotee,—
Self-exiled from the wrath of friends grown foes,—
In earnest converse seated seemed to be
Mid shadow of that huge cairn's hoary majesty.

XXXI.

Unapprehensible unto their thought
My being seemed, as I the cirque surveyed !
Albeit, so veritably that I mote
Not doubt, sat there each patriotic Shade
Revealed. Their spiritual brows arrayed
In light unearthly seemed ; and, soon, to tell
His thoughts each form began,—while Spirit made
Response to Spirit,—waking not the swell
Of sounds,—but, voiceless,—Mind to Mind seemed voluble.—

XXXII.

How long shall poor Humanity lie waste
On earth !—began this mystic utterance
Buzot,—of La Gironde's great sons not last
In toil to break the feudal bonds of France :
How long will Liberty make tarriance,—
Nor haste to bless our race ! Brothers, I deem
Our agony in this strange occupance
Of after-life a far less rueful theme
Than thought that Tyranny on earth is still supreme.

XXXIII.

Of suffering here I reckon not,—since from earth
Come spirits hither still, that each declare
Our ancient home enslaved. Who would have mirth
In after-life while Earth's poor children wear
The fetters of the despot, and despair
To break them? This is woe,—this, this,—to feel
That all in vain we broke the priestly snare,
And, with our heart's blood, did to Freedom seal
Fealty :—France, loved France, now feels the iron heel!

XXXIV.

Crushed, hated monarchy, again doth crush
Fair France; mirk superstition again weaves,
Successfully, her limed web,—aye, flush
With life, more than her ancient realm retrieves.
Soul of Condorcet!—tell me that misgrieves
My spirit, if unto thy thought profound
Hope scintillates,—if thy strong vision cleaves
The clouded future, and thou view'st unbound
Loved France,—and Europe quake at her old trumpet-sound.

XXXV.

Deep-searching spirit,—tell me, did we err—
Deeming the Palestinian story fraud
Or dreams, while we ourselves the dreamers were ;—
Deeming Earth's sceptres a pernicious gaud,
And dying to defend the banner broad
Of Universal Liberty, while meek
Obedience unto kings, and reverent land
Our duty was, of Him the fablers sleek
Extolled—the Torturer of Man from vengeful pique?

XXXVI.

Belike I err, ev'n now,—and more involve
My being in woe,—thus lightly Powers august
And solemn naming. Yet,—the strong that wolve
The weak!—the powerful that grind to dust
The helpless!—Can I err, yearning to thrust
Them from their thrones! My brother, if the doom
Of Man be hopeful, tell!—

With thought robust
And daring, thus the sombre spirit whom
Buzot addressed replied,—scorning exordium :—

XXXVII.

The spirit of Prometheus doth but sleep
Within the human heart,—lulled, drugged, and drowsed,
By Power's robed med'ciners who keenly keep
Watch o'er its breathings,—and have ever choused
Their prey into more slumber, when aroused
For a brief breath by Freedom's vital touch,
It started its sleek keepers, who caroused,
Gaily, beside their prostrate victim's couch—
Thinking it safe, for aye, within their privileged clutch!

XXXVIII.

The spirit of Prometheus doth but sleep
Within man's heart :—the dark, blood-feeding brood
Of serpents that so hush around it creep,
Now they perceive, with apprehension shrewd,
Their Terror-Trinity of Crown, Sword, Rood—
Is near evanishment,—may justly dread
The ruthless vengeance in its waking mood
Of the heart's 'Titan thought :—Up from its bed
'Twill spring, and crush the asps that on its life misfed!

XXXIX.

'The spirit of Prometheus doth but sleep :—
 The Mind's tornado wakes, through earth, ev'n now !
 And soon it will to nought the fabric sweep,
 Of age-reared Priestcraft, and its shapes of woe,—
 Its Hell, Wrath-God, and Fear—that foulest foe
 Of human freedom !—' I will freely think !'
 'Twill boldly tell the surpliced cozeners—' Lo !
 ' I dare your monster God !—nor will I shrink
 ' His tyrant tortures to defy—ev'n though I sink

XL.

' Amid the bottomless abyss of pain
 ' Ye say He hath created for his slaves !
 ' There let Him hurl me !—and despite the chain
 ' That spiritually binds me under waves
 ' Of liquid flame,—He shall find one who braves
 ' His wrath, and hurls back hatred for a God
 ' Who forms without their will His creatures,—graves
 ' Their natures on them,—rules by his own nod
 Of providence, their lives,—and, then, beneath his rod—

XLI.

' His scourge eternal, tortures them, without
 ' Surcease or intermission !—Endless fire
 For a breath's error,—for a moment's doubt !—
 Infinite Greatness exercising ire
 Relentless on a worm !—Why ?—That the quire
 Celestial may His spotless glory sing—
 His attributes harmonious made by dire
 Infliction on his worms of suffering,—
 And He Himself in joy extatic revelling !

XLII.

Oh ! what a potent poison hath benumbed
The human mind, and robbed it of its might
Inherent !—since—affrighted, cowed, begloomed,
And stultified,—this juggle of the Night
It kneels unto, and calls ‘divinest light’ !—
But, it will soon the jugglers’ toils outleap
Who long, behind the altar of their Sprite
Of blood, have played at terrible bo-peep
With Man !—the spirit of Prometheus doth but sleep !——

XLIII.

He ceased, and proudly from his visage flashed
Exultant hope’s intensest radiance.—
As,—when around Jove’s Titan victim crashed
The bounding thunder, and no mitigance
Of pain the vulture gave,—his soul’s expanse
Of hope for mortals filled with thought sublime
The offspring of Iäpetus,—till glance
Of lightnings was forgot, and space, and time ;
And Caucasus grew joyous as Elysian clime !

XLIV.

Silent and solemn musings held the band
Of patriot Shades, until, with suave aspect
And diffident, the spirit of Roland
Thus spake :—

The universe her Architect
All-wise proclaims,—since without maim, defect,
Or vain expenditure of means are all
His works beheld : their Author they reflect :
Unseen the central Light Himself ’mid pall
Of His Own brightness shrouds,—the Godhead personal.

XLV.

Yet men deny Him not because their ken
Detects not his pure Essence,—neither fail
To hymn His all-pervading goodness, when
They view pain through His universe prevail;
But, rather, as becomes their finite, frail,
And borrowed being, sum their dwarfish praise
With meek confession that poor reason's pale
Includes not perfect judgment of His ways
Who of Infinity the boundless sceptre sways.

XLVI.

Soul of Condorcet! if we now indulge
The sceptic's thought, provoke we not the scourge
We inly feel? Woes, ceaseless, here promulge
The vengeance of our Judge. Forbear to urge
His justice! Penal sojourn us may purge
From earthly stain:—let us, by duteousness
Of mind, assist the cure,—devoutly merge
Our pride in awe, and reverently confess
Our wisdom blind,—His wisdom's goodness questionless!—

XLVII.

I marvel at thy fear,—in haste replied
The sombre spirit: yet I 'sdeign to blame
The weakness of a brother; but confide,
By power of minist'ring reason to reclaim
Thy mind from cowardice. Roland! the game
Of priests hath turned upon that master-trick
For ages—'View thy finiteness with shame,
'And bow before the Infinite!'—Their quick
Presentment of that cheat still serves the politic

XLVIII.

Successors of the Jewish fishers rude,—
 As it subverted the hierarchs of old
 That, through the Orient, primal thought subdued,
 And humbled to the dust man's vision bold,
 Which would have scanned their secrets uncontrolled.
 Roland ! bethink thee what the cheat is worth !—
 Grant that Infinity cannot unfold
 Itself to finiteness :—that worms of earth
 Their Maker's government behold but in its birth :—

XLIX.

Grant that man seeing but a fleeting part
 Of God's illimitable kingdom knows
 Too little to fill up the boundless chart
 By guess :—yet, needeth it no operose
 Deduction of our reason to disclose
 This truth unto the simplest, shallowest brain——
 In the vast future God cannot oppose
 Himself : new attributes if He sustain
 Hereafter,—Man now hymns his perfectness, in vain.

L.

'Thou call'st God's goodness perfect : yet, 'It may
 'Consist with perfect goodness,'—say the priests,—
 'To damn atoms of helplessness, for aye,—
 'Although Man's finite reason manifests
 'Rebelliousness against such dread behests
 'Of Infinite Sovereignty :—it may appear
 'Lovely, hereafter,—though Man now detests
 'Such hideousness, nor doth, in heart, revere—
 'Whate'er his lips profess—this Monster stern, austere :—

LI.

‘ It may appear throughout eternity,
‘ Right and consistent,—though in time it seems
‘ Monstrously wrong,—that His philanthropy
‘ Which in creating man so brightly beams,—
‘ A thing in whose vile nature never gleams
‘ A spark of good desire,—a thing thus made
‘ Ere it could choose,—which evil good still deems,
‘ And thence can choose but evil,—till arrayed
‘ With power Divine it shuns its former nature’s shade

LII.

‘ And seeks the light of holiness,—it may
‘ Consist with His philanthropy to curse
‘ This thing because it never kneels to pray—
‘ And he withholds to ’infuse the will !’—Rehearse
These subtleties the Priests until they spere
Man’s mental strength, and blind him with such dust
Of postulates as would, if granted, ’merse
All things in doubt,—confound false, true, base, just,—
And jeopard ev’n their godliest saint’s devoutest trust :—

LIII.

For if—still perfect—God can violate
Some of His Own great declarations,—who
Dares say it will His excellence abate
If He break others ? May it not congrue
Also with his perfections to eschew
Fulfilment of His promises of bliss
Celestial to the worms that render due
Observance to His laws ?—Folly, than this
Quirk of old Austin, ne’er framed frailer artifice :—

LIV.

The cozener, seeking others to befool
Sottishly fools himself:—for, hath the saint
A firm dependence for that rest of soul,—
That endless cloyless joy his scriptures paint,—
If God of His own moral Self so faint
A portraiture vouchsafes that what he saith
Must be interpreted without constraint
Of Reason, which Himself hath given, and Faith,—
That is—the Future—must give meaning to His breath ?

LV.

If what He saith in Time, by what He doth
Throughout Eternity, must be explained,—
How shall His worms repose upon His oath ?—
Seeing that he sweareth by Himself,—unstained
Would be His word—by deeds;—since what pertained
Unto Himself men had not known ! And, thus,
The saint, though shorn of bliss, and in Hell chained
To burn, thrust down with sinners,—murderous
And false, no more than they,—could term th' All-Marvellous !

LVI.

Soul of Condorcet !—harshly verbed the ghost
Of Pétion,—I thy thought deep-searching own ;
But wherefore is our after-life engrossed
With this tame wordy-war ? Need we impugn
Stale, senile fables which the wrinkled crone
Old Superstition, yet doth croak and crool
Unto Man's infancy ? Her dying moan
Will soon, on earth, be heard : no human mole
Will long be left to grope beneath her nighted rule.

LVII.

Shall we our torture's scanty lapse mispend
By further waste of reasonings laboursome ?—
The strife with scorn why not thus tersely end—
Saith some cowed fabler—' Shall the clay presume
' To prate unto the Potter, nor succumb
' To His behests in silent awe ?'—*It shall*—
Thou knavish priest,—if such behests bring doom
Of endless torment on the victim thrall
Compelled, without its choice, through mortal life to crawl,

LVIII.

Uncognizant of terms on which the grant
Is made,—the tenure of the hurdle vile
That bears the ghostly destined habitant
Of future flames,—and must, itself, the pile
Eternal feed, as well,—to reconcile
The sateless cravings of your Monster's maw !—
Why change His Druid name ? Old Priestcraft vile
Who honours,—who its phantom shapes with awe
Acknowledgeth,—reveres fair Freedom's foulest foe !——

LIX.

On dreaming dolts,—the shade of Valazé
Exclaimed,—fraternal suasion were mispent :—
Dolts whom their craven fears will lead astray
From manly thought as soon as they have lent
Audience to reason. Feeble' and impotent
Of soul, Roland, on earth thou always wert ;
But, here, in after-life, new wonderment
We feel,—beholding thy dull mind begirt
With fabling dreams thou sought'st in life, to controvert.

LX.

Weak, fickle spirit,—on old Earth, mis-sexed !—
Conjugal tie revealed to human ken
The woman's soul unto thy clay annexed :—
'Twas thy brave helpmate breathed 'mong souls of men,
True manhood—the immortal Citoyenne !—
Dim, wavering Shade !—when wilt thou strive to break
This bondage unto weakness, and demean
Thyself as doth become a man ?—Awake
Dreamer !—thy spirit of these coward fetters shake !

LXI.

Or,—if thou lov'st the dreams that appertain
To fools,—seek the self-exiled climbing thron
That share you hill :—Hence, Folly we in vain
Have striven to make wise !—Spirits ! with strong
Derision let us chase this slave of wrong
Forth of our fellowship !—

Thou viler slave
Forbear !—Expurge the errors that belong
To thine own spirit ere thou fume and rave
Against thy brother, thus intolerantly brave !—

LXII.

So spake, and fiercely frowned, the Jacobin,
Le Bas,—who with a look of stern delight
Beheld, thus far, each haughty Brissotine
Scourge his tame brother. Soon, to join the fight
Of words hastened full many a sturdy sprite
Badged of ' the Mountain '—when the strife of blood
Raged in distracted France : Girondist wight
Gave gall for gibe : fell combat seemed renewed
Of Freedom's doubly suicidal brotherhood.

LXIII.

Malevolence, and spite, and rancour burned
Through their thin vehicles, with lurid flame ;
And, madly, that he were, once more, disurned
From the dark tomb to play an aftergame
Of blood, each yearned, and did with zeal proclaim
His frantic wish !—So horrible it seemed
To witness how they raged, that being became
A torture ; and, unconscious that I dreamed,
Methought I mourned as one to baleful life condemned.

LXIV.

But, lo ! a sudden, silent pallor seized
The hostile crew, beholding where upreared
A Shape—threat'ning as spectre unappeased
By devilish wizard who beholds afeard
The power his sable mischief hath unsphered,
But lacks the deeper skill to lay. Atween
Two cirque-stones vast the huge, gray Shape appeared,
So stone-like,—and so blind, yet stern, of mien—
That nought proclaimed it human save its gaberdine.—

LXV.

Dark atheist brood !—the mystic Shape began ;
Cease to malign Him Who the sceptre wields
Of Universe,—all Being's Guardian !—
Whose glory seraphs chaunt on heavenly fields,—
Whose favour from their foes earth's chosen shields,—
Whose vengeance ye, in Sheol, deeply prove !
Foul sons of Belial !—ev'n your hatred yields
Proof that Jehovah, from His throne above,
Governeth Men as much by judgment as by love.

LXVI.

Did ye not tear each other like the wolf
 And bear on earth ? Did ye not rend and rive
 Your fellow-clay until one crimson gulph
 Your city seemed ? Here, in the soul, survive
 Its cherished evils : judgment punitive
 Condemns ye thus to ravin in your minds,
 And slaughter with your thoughts. Ye might derive
 Light from your punishment,—but that each finds
 Foul pleasure in the darkness which his spirit blinds.

LXVII.

Judicial blindness is your guilt-won lot :—
 And,—though ye mock,—your hard impenitence
 I here rebuke : until,—foul pride subtraught
 From your soul's core, and evil prurience
 Of self-willed doubt,—with duteous reverence
 Ye bow to the Most High—returning peace
 Ye ne'er shall know ; but torturous turbulence
 And rage of vengeful passions shall increase
 Within ye ;—nor shall ye your wandering penance cease !

LXVIII.

Jehovah hath a quarrel with your pride :—
 Think ye that He will deign to justify
 Himself to atoms unto Nought allied ?
 Not to the proud into His ways that pry—
 But, to the meek who on His word rely,
 He sheweth favour——

Slaughterous Shopet hoary !—

Condorcet's spirit hurled back proud reply,—
 Repeat no more thy oft-told doting story !—
 We bow not to thy Blood-God's homicidal glory !

LXIX.

Meek champion of the lofty deity
Who clave the ass's jaw-bone to reprieve
Thy murderous life—rather than cleave for thee
A thunder-blasted tomb,—though Fraud misweave
Such shapes as His and thine, to disbelieve
That ye exist—we dare ! Abortive dreams
Of lust and blood incarnate !—fools receive
For high realities the priestly themes
Of your strange deeds : Wisdom such barb'rous tales contemns !

LXX.

Phantasm avaunt !—no real shape thou art ;—
But gendered of our insane rage and broils ;—
Or, with a myriad other mists athwart
Our thoughts that flit,—thou and thy god are foils
Of truth, which, when her strength she overtoils,
The purblind Mind creates—
Blasphemers bold !—
Samson burst forth in ire,—while the hoar piles
Of stone shook to their bases,—leave untold
Your daring sneers !—provoke not vengeance manifold !

LXXI.

Vile slaves of self-deceit !—vaunt not your zeal
For truth. Whence is this horror ye profess
For violence ? If ye to earth appeal
What saith she, shuddering, of your heinousness
Of fratricide ? To whom could ye address
So fitly as to Murder deified
Your vows of blood ? Powers whose enormousness
Of massacre and ravine thought outstride
High o'er the rites of mutual butchers should preside.

LXXII.

Affect no more this horror, so demure,
Of His strict rule Who portions penance just
Unto the filthy,—favour to the pure :—
Could ye be gods, to sate your rav'ning gust
Your votaries a human holocaust
Must pile upon your altars day by day !
Your lives disprove your claim to style august
Of high philanthropists : ere ye inveigh
'Gainst murder and revenge, mercy yourselves display !

LXXIII.

Brood of assassins !—ere ye mock at deeds
Achieved by Israel's champion—with your own
Compare them.—Faiths ye scoffed at—yet for creeds
Slaughtered each other !—To destroy the throne
Ye banded, since a monster curse 'twas grown—
And then o'er crowds enfranchised raised the axe !—
I wonder Earth, with headless corpses strown
And drenched with gore, from touch of maniacs
So murderous shrunk not—hurrying to wild parallax !

LXXIV.

Ye slaughtered for the sake of blood : I slew
My foes in self-defence. Ye murdered whom
Yourselves made free !—I crushed the brutal crew
Of haughty tyrants who to slavish doom
Sentenced my fatherland,—aye, in one tomb
O'erwhelmed myself and them, rather than live
Myself a slave—my country slaved ! To dumb
Confusion are ye stricken ? Let shame revive !—
Her glow, though late, may prove of wisdom nutritive.

LXXV.

Now, list my embassy from souls of kings
And Gentile Shophets who in throned conclave,
Ye know, at lapse of penal wanderings,
Sit girt with pomps, and visioned splendours have.
Whether the Power that formed all things Man gave
Unto his brother like the ox and horse
To minister, a sturdy, craft-trained slave
For food,—or did ‘Equality’ endorse
On human natures—they pursue abstruse discourse.

LXXVI.

Such is the essence of their strife—surround
It as they may with mist of words. Had ye
Less madly played your part millions unbound
Might now proclaim the coming jubilee
Of nations : Sheol’s Thrones in agony
Forbode their fall—conscious of mystic tie
That binds them with Earth’s crowns : their destiny
And Man’s they seek : I bid ye to the high
Debate :—but, first, your souls’ dark errors rectify !

LXXVII.

I leave ye to self-chastisement—that scourge
More poignant than all tortures from without.
May deep-wrought penitence your spirits purge
From the foul stain of atheistic doubt—
That ye, at length, may join the choral shout
Of ransomed millions, when to end all pain
God’s great Messiah comes !—that vision fraught
With bliss the rapt seers saw on Jordan’s plain
And Judah’s sacred hills.—Jehovah, haste Thy reign !—

LXXVIII.

He spake and faded,—as some threatening cloud
Of fearful shape disperseth in thin air
Leaving no trace to shew where, ebon-browed,
But now, it frowned and darkened to despair
The eye of day. No more with rage to tear
And rend each other burned the jarring host
Of patriot Shades rebuked ;—but, to declare
His chastened thought began Babœuf's pale ghost—
Equality's last self-exile from Gallia's coast.—

LXXIX.

If brothers still we be,—he said,—and zeal
For contest has not cancelled loftier sense
Of right,—let us essay this strife to heal
With kindness : not vengeful virulence
And taunt will dissipate Mind's grossness dense,—
Nor free it from fanatic mists obscure.
Boast we of Reason ?—let us evidence
The gift by pointing, with persuasion pure,
Our weaker brother unto Truth's bright cynosure.

LXXX.

I yield not to this terror-shape belief
In his old fables ; neither fail to know
That earthly tyrannies derive their chief
Strength from the fear with which men quake and bow
To Powers Unknown :—yet, brothers, do we owe
Regard to these rebukes : let us desist
From unfraternal gibes whereby our woe
Is deepened,—soul to soul antagonist
Rendered,—and Earth's old jars in after-life exist.

LXXXI.

Fled we not hither less by inward dread
Of ignominious death than sick at heart
With our abortive strife,—in which was shed
Torrents of Frenchmen's blood ? Oh ! let the smart
Of anguish for self-errors here impart
Regretful tenderness for frailties shown
By brethren. Still, I fear, these storms athwart
Our after-life will come ! My stain I own ;
And would by present pain for errors past atone !——

LXXXII.

Spirits !—rejoined Condorcet,—Humbled thought
Avails not the mind's errors to expel :
Self-chastisement for frailty nurtures not
The growth of wisdom : Reason doth rebel
Against the slavish gloom which priests so well,
For their vile ends, depicture as the true
Discipline for the soul. They most excel
In wisdom who the past can calmly view
With deep resolve error in future to eschew.

LXXXIII.

Aye, they are wisest, best, who still maintain
The calm, firm, steady toil to' emancipate
Mind from its frailties : Tears, on earth, are vain,
And low regrets, in this our afterstate :
Man's noblest part is still to battle Fate,
Or Circumstance, or whatsoe'er afflict
His essence ;—joy, as grief, to moderate
By Reason's rule—not monkish rigour strict—
Rule that with ease the soul may gratefully addict

LXXXIV.

Herself to serve ;—and by sure steps, though slow,
Thus climb Elysian height serene. How long
In circles shall we reason ? Whence the woe
We here experience—save from passion strong
And changeful ? Spirits ! let us not prolong
Debate amid these ruins,—but the theme
Renew where kings invite polemic throng
Of Essences !——

I woke : for, like a gleam
Electric, vanished the wild actors of my dream !

NOTES TO BOOK THE FIFTH.

(1) Stanza 13.—I write from no personal knowledge of John Frost,—for the ‘Newport insurrection’ occurred more than a year before I became acquainted with a single Chartist,—but from the testimony of my eloquent and intelligent friend, Henry Vincent, who had witnessed Mr. Frost’s upright discharge of duty as a magistrate, frequently partook of his hospitality, shared deeply his political views and purposes, and speaks enthusiastically (I mean in private) of the poor exile’s generous sincerity and patriotic high-mindedness.

(2) Stanza 14.—“Treason doth never prosper : what’s the reason ?
“For, if it prosper none dare call it treason.”

So says Sir John Harrington ; and, without asserting that it was morally or physically possible for the Welsh *emeute* of November, 1839, to have succeeded,—I shall not shrink to avow my conviction that the fated enterprise of John Frost, which had for its object the enfranchisement of every sane male inhabitant of Great Britain and Ireland, of twenty-one years of age, was equally as noble, although not so imposing, as the triumph-arms of the Barons of Runnymede,—or the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688. Reflection,—and, above all, *prison*-reflection,—has, indeed, done much to impress me with the belief that a resort to force, under any circumstances, is indefensible, either as a wise or a just proceeding,—but, for the life of me, I cannot subdue the feeling of an Englishman when the picture starts before my imagination of Hampden on Chalgrove Field “drawing the sword and throwing away the scabbard.” And if Patriotism need not be ashamed at the thrill of the blood which such a portrait enkindles,—why blush to own admiration for the heroism of poor Shell,—a youth of singular masculine beauty, and an enthusiast for the en-

franchisement of his own order,—who loaded and fired his piece three times, with the greatest intrepidity, before he fell in the streets of Newport? We do not write History like the glorious old Greeks, or the memory of *such* a hero would not be lost. Lost!—let me remember that a Nugent—to whom all honour!—has had the moral courage to exert himself, and successfully, for the erection of a column on Chalgrove Field, at the bi-century of Hampden's death.—May not a *noble* be found, in November 2039, to commemorate Shell's fall at Newport with equal earnestness? Servility and Prejudice may be staggered at the thought *now*—but what would have been thought of a column to Hampden, when the bones of Cromwell, Bradshaw, and Ireton had been dug up, and were hung in gibbet-irons?

(3) Stanza 17.—See prefatory Advertisement.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

I.

Blood ! blood !—Ye human hell-hounds,—when, oh ! when
Will ye have had your fill ? The hazy morn
Hath scarcely dawned upon this grisly den
Of demon Power, ere yon poor wretch forlorn
Is led to slaughter :—led ?—nay, fainting, borne
Unto the ladder's foot ! Murder by law,
In lieu of med'cine till his wits return,
And pity, for a creature whose brain-flaw
Urged him, ev'n while he wept, to lay his infant low !

II.

It is the death-toll : there ! they bear him on !
I climb to read the lesson through my bars.—
Hah ! curse upon thee, priest !—is it well done,
That thou, a peace-robed herald pattering prayers,
Dost head the dead-march ? Trow'st thou not it jars
With that sky-message which proclaimed, thou say'st,
' Peace and Goodwill to Man ' ?—aye, that it mars
The face of mercy to behold thee placed
There, in grim state, 'twixt spears with crape, in mockery, graced ?

III.

"Tis passed,—the bloody cavalcade : Farewell,
Poor pale, weak, fellow-worm ! 'twill soon be o'er,—
Thy tearful pilgrimage. 'Tis done !—the knell
Ceases ; and though, I, happ'ly, see no more
Of the fell tragedy,—the sullen roar
Of groans and execrations, pierces through
My dungeon-grating,—for the gazers pour
The heart's involuntary curse on you,
Ye hireling butchers who now ' give the law its due ' ! (1)

IV.

Oh ! I would weep throughout the live-long day
With memory how my fellow-man hath wept
Through ages and bewail him as the prey
Of foul Draconian beasts which he hath kept
In reverence high,—but, that I feel, except
The melting mood be mastered, and fierce ire
As well, and Man becomes a calm adept
In tracing errors to their spring,—the fire
Of that real Hell that burns on earth shall ne'er expire.

V.

Why should I curse thee, priest ? Art thou not bound
To' obey thy patched creed's dogmas ? ' Blood for blood '
Thy rubric reads,—with logic most profound ;—
And, lest by disobedience, the world should
Halt on its axle, ye, meek brotherhood !
Must see the ' Law Divine ' fulfilled. He meant
Not what he said—the Nazarene—the Good !
Or, still the rubric stands *for murderers* : blent
With mystery is God's law, and mocks Man's measurement !

VI.

Hah ! how long will ye palter thus, to screen
Your conscious inconsistency, and hide
The Truth from Man ? Either the Nazarene
Or Moses errs. And, if stern homicide
Man's homicidal will could salutarily chide
Of old,—the Law of Blood, maugre all change,
Must still be wholesome. But, ye should abide
By *all* the Law : ' eye,' ' tooth,' ' hand,' ' foot'—avenge,
Avenge !—Ye may not from the whole a part estrange !⁽²⁾

VII.

Doff, then, thine alb, and don the ephod, priest,—
If thou art Moses' minister ! Ah, no !—
Thou too successfully and long hast fleeced
The sheep in that white garment to forego
The gain of doubleness. Neither art thou
And thy smooth tribe unskilful to discern
That while ye must stand by your yokefellow,
The hangman, and together prop the stern
Sway of brute kings,—fair uses hath your coat extern :

VIII.

It symbols meekness well, and peace, ye preach
To slaves : Christ's precepts are for them ! Your drame
Hath thus its parts,—and ye are prompt for each !
Dark ambidexters in the guilty game
Of human subjugation !—how to tame
Man's spirit ye, and only ye, have skill :
Kings need your help to hold their thrones,—while claim
Of sanctity enables ye, at will,
To wield o'er prostrate Reason subtler empire still !

IX.

What tyrants leave unvanquished in the mind
By threat of chains, the gallows, flame, or sword,—
Ye humble by your Hell !—

Was I not blind—
To judge ye inconsistent ? True accord
Subsists between your new and elder ' word.'
Ye throw away no part : it is because,—
With cunning shrewder than the simple horde
O' th' laity,—ye ken the penal clause
Blends in one spirit fierce the old and late Jews' laws.—

X.

' Forgive them,—for they know not what they do !'—
O Christ ! how worshipfully great thou art
Uttering such dying breath ! A lowly Jew,
Born and brought up with beings whose old heart
Was nurtured, from far time, to count the smart
Of suffering in a foe sweet to behold ;—
From rule of blood for blood ne'er to depart,—
Of eye for eye, and tooth for tooth ;—to fold
'The law of vengeance,—given while the thunder roll'd,

XI.

And lightnings flashed, and the loud trumpet pealed
Forth from the shrouded hill,—in the heart's core,
As dearer than all treasures earth can yield ;—
Law eulogised, confirmed by Prophets hoar,—
By solemn awe-rapt bards,—and all the lore
Thy country ever knew ! If not Divine
Thou wert,—thy self-born light and love is more
Miraculous than aught by all the line
Of the heart's precept-makers writ in page benign.

XII.

Hunted to death,—nailed to ‘the tree of shame,’—
Fainting, expiring,—and thy last heart’s prayer
Breathing for them who gibbeted thy name
Above that thorn-crowned head, nor did forbear,
When spirit-desolation or despair
Seized thee, to mock thy groans ! Forgiveness,—love,—
For those who tortured thee ! Oh ! if such rare
Triumph o’er ill be human, it doth prove
A glorious nobility in Man enwove !

XIII.

And ’tis enwove in Man : else, wherefore pleads
High reason in that prayer ?—‘ they know not what
‘ They do !’—Compassion for a being whose deeds
Resulting from his ignorance denote
His errors accidental,—not inwrought
By natural vice, or willed, in Reason’s spite,
When Knowledge shews the wrong. By Reason brought
Thus to regard our brother, inner might
Of love fraternal springs, and Pity’s calm delight.

XIV.

What say’st thou, priest ?—‘ It is not thus ?’—Do threats
Of Hell, then, fill the heart with this intense
And holy bliss of pitying love ? Begets
Thy rhetoric of the flames Omnipotence
Blows everlastingly for bodily sense
(By miracle also made eternal) ;—worm
Preying for aye, with sateless appetite
On conscience ;—do these horrors sow the germ
Of love in Man,—and threats renewed its growth confirm ?

XV.

And yet, thy Master preached this Hell : with all
His sovereign magnanimity, and free
Expanse of soul,—the Nazarene a thrall
Remained to the old desart-Deity,—
The ‘ jealous’ Vengeance-God !—

Shrewd Priest ! of thee
I judged but shallowly : thy puzzle-book
Thou read’st more skilfully than I : agree
Thy Teachers twain : the Galilean shook
Not off from his large mind the mountain-thunderer’s yoke.

XVI.

Hell-fire,—coercion,—for the ingrate hard
Who will not love the God set forth as high,
Vast, indescribable, in His Love’s regard
For Men ! ‘ Love him,—or He will magnify
‘ His glory by consigning thee to die
‘ In ceaseless flames an ever-living death’ !—
O Christ ! how can I love what doth outvie
All tyrannies in horribleness of wrath,—
This monstrous Thing derived from an old monster Faith ?

XVII.

Thine, Galilean, is of all earth’s creeds
The greatest marvel ! Wonder at thy toil
Of tears, self-sacrifice, and love, succeeds
Each step we tread with thee—till this dread foil
Unto thy moral beauty doth despoil
The yearning heart of its impassioned hope :
Death-stricken, blighted, doth the soul recoil
From its tempestuous wish to love thee : droop
It must in doubt ;—and to its bourne in darkness grope !

XVIII.

Oh ! hadst thou not so lovely been on earth, .
I would not care to share thy Paradise :
'This wish to live beyond the grave hath birth
Without my will ;—yet, by the sovereign voice
Of Reason 'twould be hushed,—but that the bliss
Of knowing such a heart as thine doth seem
A boundless joy,—a good beyond all price :—
And still I wish thy heaven were not a dream,—
And, to my latest hour shall doat upon that theme !

XIX.

Alas ! thy repetition of that most
Enslaving of all slavish thoughts—a Hell
Wherewith the Priest may threat to tame the ghost
Of him who dares in mortal life rebel
'Gainst Faith or Kings—restrains the heart's love-swell
Rushing to centre in thee, and reveals
To Reason that thou couldst not burst the spell
Of Circumstance—which ev'n the mightiest seals
In impotence : we do but act as she impels.

XX.

Greatest of moral miracles thou art :
So much more godlike than all godlike men :
Pardoning thy murderers, even while thy heart
They pierced : born in a land where rock and glen,
On every hand that met thy love-lit ken,
Were during witnesses of brothers' blood
Shed by, or for Jehovah !—Denizen
Of such a clime—Child of so fierce a brood—
What wonder at one speck in thy vast sun of good ?

XXI.

One link—thy penal Hell,—with the old Past,—
 The age of error, force, and punishment,—
 Connects thee ;—but, thy themes of mercy vast,
 Of love and brotherhood,—the aliment
 Shall be for kindred souls on love intent
 And mercy, every hour,—until the might
 Their spirits draw from thine omnipotent
 Shall render them,—and they shall chase the Sprite
 Of Blood and Force that doth all human joyaunce blight.

XXII.

Goodness, thou didst enthrone : our generous sires,—
 Drawn by thy generous themes,—Woden and Thor
 Abandoned, quenching all their idol-fires
 To worship Whom they called ‘ the Good ’ : before
 Goodness personified thy Gospel’s lore
 Taught them, they thought, to bow,—and ‘ God ’ became
 Their Deity——

What small shrill voice doth pour
 Its wailing from that grated window-frame ?—
 What note of Pain doth thus my feeble brain-steps maim ?

XXIII.

Hah ! murderous spider !—when I watched thee spread
 Thy cobweb yestermorn, it did relieve
 A dreary prison-hour to mark each thread
 From thee, thou magic artizan, receive
 Its faery texture : while I saw thee weave
 That dædal miracle, this poison-thought
 Rose not that now impelleth me to grieve
 Much more than to admire—to grieve and doubt,
 As, in a torment-web, like thy poor victim, caught !——

XXIV.

Priest ! dost thou smile, beholding how the web
Of thought, involves, at length, its devotee,
And lays him, helpless as a limber babe,
At Mystery's feet ? Oh ! I will slander thee
No more : if Nature hath a Deity,
The Bible doth not slanderously limn
His portraiture : Author of agony
The living book doth, hourly, picture Him :
The written—thrones a Slaughterer 'tween the Cherubim !

XXV.

'Tis clear : who tries *the Faith* by Nature's test,—
O modern Stagyrte !—between thy creed
And Her must own 'Analogy' confest.—
'Submit thee, then, vain doubter !—since decreed
'It is that Life consists of things of greed
'And things to be their prey,—submit and bow
'To Him who made them thus : back, that may lead
'Thee to *the Faith* in which, thou dost allow,
'The Deity is drawn with Nature's girded brow !'

XXVI.

Priest ! I will answer thee with that free soul
These bolts and bars have only served to thew.—
Forty short summers towards my earthly goal
Have I now journeyed,—and, for me, but few
More summers can remain : Wrong to eschew,
And Right to choose, with heartfelt earnestness,
How can I lack dispose,—while, to my view,
The grave is yawning in its cold duress
To close what tyrants leave of my clay's feebleness ?

XXVII.

Priest ! I have felt by turns from earliest days,
As well as calms, the tempest of the brain :—
Fervid devotion, and the wild rapt blaze
Of ecstasy in prayer ; ascetic pain
And fasting ; midnight book-toil to obtain
The key to facts—knowledge of tongues of old ;
Weighing of evidence—grave,—long,—again ;
With constant watchings how Man doth unfold
What is the impress true he bears from Nature's mould ;—

XXVIII.

And this, in humbleness I would declare,
And yet with courage, is my only Faith :—
Goodness alone, with its blest, yearning care,
Is worshipful—for Goodness only hath
Power to make good and happy things of breath
And thought. If Man can be transformed
Wholly to virtue,—punishment and wrath,—
Taught by all priests that on the earth have swarmed,—
Must be untaught ; and Man by Love to Right be charmed.

XXIX.

Goodness alone is worshipful.—Not what
Gives life, but what gives happiness is good.
I cannot worship what I own a blot
To be in my own nature—hasty flood
Of feeling that with ireful hardihood
Would rush to do what I would soon regret :
Nor can I worship, priest ! thy Shapes of Blood,
Or Nature's cause of Pain :—if to beget
Love in the soul these fail—shall worship there be met ?

XXX.

I cannot worship what I cannot love.—
If this be vicious, priest! shew me the way
To virtue : I will own,—if thou dost prove
My error : but, till then, I humbly say,
I think the error thine. To resurvey,
For proofs of Deity, great Nature's face,
Drawn, yea impelled, unto Mind's latest day,
I shall be by Her wonders ;—but—th' embrace
Of All-pervading Goodness,—shall I find It's trace ?

XXXI.

I say not that there is no God : but that
I know not. Dost *thou* know, or dost thou guess ?—
Why should I ask thee, priest ? Darkness hath sat
With Light on Nature,—Woe with Happiness,—
Since human worms crawled from their languageless
Imperfect embryos, and by signs essayed
To picture their first thoughts. 'Tis but excess
Of folly to attempt the great charade
To solve ; and yet the irking wish must be obeyed !—

XXXII.

Night hath returned on me,—ev'n as it closed
Upon these dizzying thoughts in human things
Thousands of years ago :—Two Powers opposed
Eternally,—or Good with boundless wings
Brooding o'er Universe—the egg whence springs
Evil : the Mede's, Hindoo's, Egyptian's strife
To make himself believe some glimmerings
He saw of Truth, through Nature's garment rife
With Mystery : Hebrew fable of primeval life

XXXIII.

In happy Eden,—Eve, and glozing snake :
Or myth more artificial of the land
Of arts and song,—Pandora's box, with ache
And boil and pestilence, by man's rash hand
Unlidded,—punishment for theft of brand
From Heaven :—

Night hath returned, as she returned
To millions, who through life thus vainly scanned
The face of mystery.—What, though they burned
In vain to know,—yet never Nature's secret learned ?—

XXXIV.

Desire to know must still within us burn—
Though its quick fire our fragile clay consume :
For who would crawl in brutal unconcern
Along his fated pathway to the tomb,—
Nor ever ask if thought-flame shall relume
This clay, or it shall sleep a dull, dark, cold,
Eternal sleep ?—

I slept, and dreamt the doom
Of suicidal souls,—great souls of old,—
I did, once more, in mystic spirit-land behold.

XXXV.

The thrones were set, in gorgeous shew, beneath
The rainbow-roofed and column-girt expanse,—
Filled with the votaries of self-wrought death
I saw before ;—and, with like cognizance
Of crown and sceptre, shedding radiance
From gems and gold, they sat,—or, lesser state
Kept, as of civic power's participance
The fitter emblem. 'Sdeignfully elate
Some sat,—while some sent forth deep glances of debate :

XXXVI.

For, mingled with the thrones, rose, seats of strange
Fantastic structure,—seeming, medley-wise,
The courage, cunning, pride, despair, revenge,
The love of fatherland, or high emprise,
Wisdom, or eloquence, to symbolize
Of their famed occupants,—a lustrous host
Begirt with rays, whose thoughts wore no disguise,—
So that my spirit scanned each musing ghost,
And read the characters in his mind's book engrossed.—

XXXVII.

Transcending far, in grace, all regal thrones,
'Twin seats neighb'ring the godlike Spartan's stood,
O'er-canopied with bended necks of swans,
And drooping plumes, and doves' white wings embowed,—
Adorned beneath with blossom, bell, and bud,
The loveliest of every season's growth,
In garlands woven, upon drapery strewed
With bees that swarmed on infant Plato's mouth,
And lucent shells that gem the sea-shore of the south :

XXXVIII.

Whereon, sat he whose lightning-tipp'd tongue
Had made Greece glorious unto farthest time,
Had Socrates ne'er lived, nor Homer sung,
Nor Marathon been found beneath her clime ;—
And, by his side, his brother Greek, the prime
In rhetoric art, Isocrates,—whose pen
Could fill the Attic mind with throes sublime,—
Aye, fire the brain of humblest citizen
With ecstasy unknown to gross-souled, late-born men.

XXXIX.

An elder glory, near Demosthenes
And his fraternal sprite, on radiant seat
Upborne, like Neptune's chariot on the seas,
Appeared : prows of the Persian's prostrate fleet,
And eagles' wings, and tridents,—hatchments meet
For victory,—with oaken wreaths, adorned
His bright shell-chariot ;—while, with prancing feet,
His fish-tailed steeds the waveless pavement spurned,
And, proudly, to the roof, their wide-spread nostrils turned :

XL.

And throned in glory sat the illustrious shade
Of him whose name with Salamis shall live
For aye,—'less freemen fail and Freedom fade
On every shore, and some new Xerxes give
To earth his will for law, and ocean grieve,—
Mirthful no longer at the tyrant's whip.—
That latest Greek who struggled to retrieve
His country's greatness, and the plumes to clip
Of Rome's fierce eagle, by Achæan captainship,

XLI.

Sat next Themistocles,—the latest Greek
Worthy the name,—Diæus,—who, when fell
Corinth with Carthage, scorned to live a meek
Breath-unit in a world now Rome's, or swell
Her earth-spread train of slaves. Immoveable
Sat Zeno, stoic sire, on shapeless rock
Of ebon granite,—with a look to quell
Kings' mindless pomps,—so loftily it woke
The regal soul to spurn false grandeur's gaudy yoke.

XLII.

His noblest Roman son the suicide,
 Of Utica, with simple oaken crown
 Adorned, sat on a kindred rock, and eyed
 Th' enervate Antony upon his throne,
 Until he seemed to shrink beneath that frown,
 And shun its keen reproof. A mystic shape
 On milk-white steed, girt with a starry zone,
 Sat smiling as he saw the pavement gape :
 Emblems of Rome's cleft form, Curtius, and his leap.

XLIII.

'Twin-seats, again, I saw,—near Antony's,—
 But unlike his, of iron mould,—and blazed
 With sword and spear, and manifold device
 Of slaughter,—whereon sat the twain oft praised
 For patriots,—th' aristocrats who raised
 Their daggers 'gainst the despot,—not to pave
 Plebeian paths to Right,—but,—long bedazed
 With freedom false,—patrician power to save :
 They who, near Philippi, sped, world-sick, to the grave.

XLIV.

And near them sat Caius th' Agrarian,—
 Cornelia's younger boast,—the truly great
 And good, though stamped with History's hireling ban :
 With simple oaken chaplet he kept state
 Kings seemed to envy, as he smiling sate
 On cornucopias shedding Ceres' fruit
 From wreath'd gold,—while o'er him bended date,
 And olive, orange, fig, and cocoa nut,— [root.
 Festooned with vines, and draped with green gourds round the

XLV.

On either hand the Gracchus, miniature
Array of honours gilded Carbo's brow,
With his young head that once,—by act impure
Of vengeful Sylla, his great father's foe,—
Bedecked a pole i' th' forum, for a show,—
Jugurtha's conqueror's son. ⁽³⁾ With these appeared
Full many a Roman ghost that fled from blow
By bestial Cæsars threatened,—souls that feared
Not death itself,—but—to die tyrant-massacred.

XLVI.

Nor lacked there Roman spirits of the days
When Rome and her old gods of friendly faith
Were nullified by new Byzantium's blaze,
And its exclusive creed. Crowned with sere wreath,
On mouldering columns, Photius sat—who death,—
A freeman's death,—preferred, to humbling loss
Of self-respect,—giving away his breath
When false Justinian bade old Pagan gloss
Should cease, and all the world bow down before the Cross.⁽⁴⁾

XLVII.

Rome's elder terror, by the Pontic king
Appeared,—the one-eyed Carthaginian :
Athwart, he sat, upon a living thing
Of monster form,—a seat equestrian,
Blending an elephant whose forehead's span
Was vast as Hindoo Ganesa's,—a pard
With hide besprent, like that gruff Scythian
By Ceres changed,⁽⁵⁾—and feet of beast that marred
The seer, but halted, by the ass, the corpse to guard.⁽⁶⁾

XLVIII.

Fast by the thrones of Saul and Zimri lay
A mass of hideousness, where crocodile,
And snake, and scorpion, and tarantula,
Were blent into one reptile, huge and vile,—
The dorsual seat of that old peer of guile
Who hanged himself because the Archite's rede
Was ta'en by rebel Absalom. On pile
Of hybrid life,—half-bull, half-desart-steed,—
Sat Eleazar, of the Maccabees' bold breed.

XLIX.

And Razis (⁷) near him sat, on monster beast
More fell,—commingling tiger, wolf, and bear,—
With claws and beak of bird that maketh quest
For dead men's flesh. Where the Byzantines were
Sat Arbogast the Frank, (⁸) with savage stare
Leaning upon a shape half-stag, half-hound ;—
And other suicides assembled there,
Of Gallic mien, gazed haughtily, and frowned,
As if they liked not well the regal pomps around :

L.

These shapes, methought, were they whom, late, I saw,
When, wandering over Freedom's desert plain,
I came unto a mound, and stood with awe
To see the hoary cirque,—the ruined fane.—
And other spirits which had filled the train
Of my night-visions I, again, beheld :—
The bards were there from Phantasy's domain—
The mystic grove ; and with these sprites of eld
Came, now, a late-born host which in that region dwelled.

LI.

And, from the Mount of Vanity, methought
The Indian and the Agrigentine seemed
To be remet,—while they had with them brought,—
Of spirits I beheld when erst I dreamed,—
A host whose essences defiance gleamed
For contest of the soul. Nor lacked they feud
For long : mind-syllables, terse, vigorous, beamed
Forth from the spiritual similitude
Of the great Pontic king,—who thus debate renewed :—

LII.

Spirits ! who waits preamble, or proclaim
Of thesis, since to all our argument
Is known ? The Spartan saith this goodly frame
Of kingly pomps Nature hath sagely blent
With typic forms for our admonishment,
And foretells utter change—Equality,
Knowledge, and Joy, for ever confluent
Through Hades ; and for Earth like destiny :—
Say, Spirits, with the Spartan's do your thoughts agree ?——

LIII.

Thus Mithridates spake,—and, straight, the theme
Cleanthes seized. With meek and modest grace
At Zeno's feet he sat, and diadem
Or tiar had seemed mockery to place
Upon his brow,—so brightly beamed each trace
Of mental nobleness through the rare veil
That clad his essence. In that mystic space,
When he arose, kings' splendours seemed to pale
In glory, 'fore his soul's refulgence spiritual.

LIV.

Monarchs, and bards, and sages old,—be said ;
I utter, first, my humble sentence brief,
That spirits of more reach, and skilled to thread
The maze of symbol, type, and hieroglyph,
May follow, more at large. I yield belief
To Nature's sage interpreters of things
When Reason guides their theme ; but, for my chief
In wisdom I acknowledge none who clings,
Fondly, to worship of his own imaginings.

LV.

If Reason guide the Spartan, it is well :
If Phantasy, I heed him not : unskilled,
Myself, in riddles, I will simply tell
My judgment from within. On earth, I toiled
A menial slave by night, (⁹) my toil beguiled
With sweet thoughts how the morning would renew
Wisdom's boon nurture, that by day distilled
From Zeno's spirit on my soul like dew,
Until my being to intellectual stature grew.

LVI.

And, if the Past I could live o'er again,
The joys of wisdom to the gauds of power
I would prefer : ev'n now, while in my ken
Glow regal grandeurs, how they seem to cower
Before the spirit's nobler, loftier dower,—
Wisdom and virtue ! Monarchs, to offend
I seek not,—but, that changes o'er ye lour
I also prophecy !—Man will ascend
To Truth, and soon unto false glory cease to bend.

LVII.

Mind is awake, in Hades ; while, on earth,
Crowds ask aloud what real excellence
Subsists in shew ; demand the proof of worth
From Privilege that lolls in indolence
While Poverty toils on with pang intense
Of bodily hunger ; and proclaim, in ire,
Their stern resolve, that throned magnificence,—
The dullard son derives from doltish sire,—
With conquerors' pomps, late won by murder, shall expire !—

LVIII.

He ceased ; and Appius, Rome's old lecher vile,
With base effrontery uprose to jeer ;—
But indignation burst from regal pile
O'th' Pontic king, that whelmed with shame and fear
The rude one, and subdued his scoff and sneer :
And albeit Nero Mithridates blamed,
Yet, on the lewd decemvir fell severe
And ireful glances from a host ashamed
To call him Roman—till he fled forth spirit-maimed !—

LIX.

When, lo ! a filthy and obscene baboon
Upprew in Appius' seat,—while kings aghast,
Dumb-founded, gazed to see the creature soon
Take up the Roman's staff, he, in his haste,
Let fall, and mock the pomp of each dynast
That there held golden sceptre ! All were mute
With wonderment—till darkness overcast
The throne where lately sat the dissolute
Old Roman,—and then vanished throne and salvage brute !

LX.

While, in the rainbowed sky a giant hand
Appeared, and pointed to the throneless void,
Filling the wonder-stricken sceptred band
With deepest dread. Lycurgus, meanwhile, eyed
The change with smiles,—yet, not as one that joyed
To view the Roman's sufferings, or his fall,—
But, seeming glad to know one shape destroyed
Among those images of human thrall—
As earnest that like change should pass upon them all.

LXI.

He spake not ; but the monarch-spirits gazed
With awe upon the Spartan's volumed look,
And read his thought.—
By splendours unbedazed,
By prophecies or fears of change unshook,
The aweless Carthaginian silence broke :—
Will this strange visitation check the boast
Of haughty Rome,—he said,—this vengeance-stroke
Of the high Powers that rule this mystic coast
Offended with the Roman monster's obscene ghost ?

LXII.

Such was Rome's progeny in her fresh youth,—
Her age of public virtue,—when, with vaunt
Of kingly vipers crushed in their young growth,
Her victor plebeians swelled their choral chaunt !
What wonder, then, that her exuberant
Maturity conceived gigantic forms
Of turpitude, so foully miscreant,
That Nature shuddered to reveal their germs,
And, while their mother bore them, darkened earth with storms! (¹⁰)

LXIII.

And shall their images sit here enthroned
With virtuous shapes, while thus the Powers Divine
On one take vengeance ? Will they thus confound
Desert with baseness ? Not from typic sign,
Abounding in this mystical confine,
I prophesy,—but confidence in Right,—
'Spite of reverses the Gods intertwine
With Virtue's course,—fills me with bright
Anticipations they will yet the Good requite.

LXIV.

That ruin threatens Thrones of bloated vice,
I doubt not ; but, that Good with Ill shall fade,
I credit not the Spartan aruspice.—
Thus Hannibal the gathering fears allayed
Of some ; but rendered guiltier Thrones afraid
Their fall was near,—so that with fiendish rage
These swelled :—but judgment soon the tempest stayed !
Two of Rome's swoln, embruted lineage
Evanished from the view of king, and bard, and sage ;

LXV.

And, for brief season, upon Nero's throne
A tiger sat upright, with robe bedecked,
And glared upon a swine that wore the crown
Of Bonosus, and held its shape erect
Upon the drunkard's seat. Each did affect
Despotic airs, sceptred and diademmed,
Until the lesson did the pride correct
Of many a ghost that there sat crowned and gemmed ;
And some within their essence royalty condemned.

LXVI.

Anon, fell darkness on the mimic brutes ;
And then a void was left where each robed beast
Had sat with mock-monarchial attributes ;—
While, from the roof, huge pendent hands impressed
Deep dread,—pointing to either space divest
Of throne and image,—that the Spartan's word
Might soon be signally made manifest ;—
And silence chill, such as in sepulchred
Earth-regions dwells, did long that hall of Thrones begird.—

LXVII.

At length, uprose the Gracchus, and with calm
And graceful act, but look that inly glowed
With noblest fervour, laid aside his palm,
While thus, in generous tide his accents flowed :
Spirits, that sit mysteriously endowed
With sign of sovereignty, I now conjure
Your essences by these strange judgments bowed,
Say,—if it would Man's general bliss ensure,—
Could ye bemoan your empty splendour's forfeiture ?

LXVIII.

What veritable good, in your proud joy
On earth, could ye possess ? While hunger keen
Tortured the Poor, did not your banquets cloy ?
Could ye, beholding ragged Misery's mien,
Feel really happy in your grandeur's sheen ?
While thousands wandered homeless o'er the soil,—
Worn, suffering, fainting, wretched,—did ye lean
On your soft pillows won from Labour's spoil,
And never think with pity on the sufferer's toil ?

LXIX.

It could not be : for ye had human hearts :
Ye knew men were your brethren, and deep thought—
Such as men feel when wounded conscience smarts—
Must oft have stirred within ye, and have smote
Your bosoms with remorse, until it brought
Ye well-nigh to resolve ye would descend
From your afflictive thrones, and bring to nought
That human scourge—your power ;—all woe-toil end ;—
And, to lift up mankind your life long effort lend.

LXX.

Ye must have thought—to banish want and sorrow
Would bring the heart more truthful happiness
Than all the gaudy lustre ye could borrow
From the toil-worm, for robe and train and jess,—
From jewelled crown, and gold in its excess :—
But ye were held by Fate : her power restrained,
Controlled, benumbed your wills that yearned to bless
Your weeping brethren, and ye thus remained
Agents to work out evil,—and for evil reigned.

LXXI.

But evil brings forth good : as Good, of old,
Produced Evil,—so now, when all things shew
The mystery of Being doth unfold
Some glimpses of its issue,—and the True
From out the hollow False doth brightly glow,
And cannot, longer, be from Man concealed,—
So now, Good shall result from Evil : woe
And want shall cease,—Man's heart-ache shall be healed,—
And, in your fall, the true Elysium be revealed.

LXXII.

Do ye not joy at this, ev'n now, discerning
What potent sympathies unite old Earth
And Hades,—with what aspirations yearning,
Spirits in penal realm are given birth
To large fraternal thoughts that wander forth
Diffusing faith that all shall gladness prove ?
Kings,—brothers,—stifle not the germs of worth
That now within ye spring !—With us commove
To usher in the jubilee of Truth and Love !—

LXXIII.

Th' Agrarian ceased ; and, with his passionate plea
Enkindled, rose the Attic orator :—
O kings, can outward state ennoble ye,—
He said,—can visionary blazons more
Exalt ye, than the healing balm to pour
Of gentle goodness on your brother's soul ?
Oh, is not goodness truly regal ? Frore
With gold and gems, and frowning cold control,—
Is he, indeed, a king,—whose heart's unpitiful ?

LXXIV.

Is he not truly an ignoble churl
Who knows no heart-thirst for another's weal ?—
O kings, how small the sacrifice to hurl
Aside these vanities, if ye could feel
True brotherhood with Man ! Earnest appeal
The generous Roman to your nobler thought
Hath made,—but still your essences reveal
Returning sternness, and returning doubt
Whether these judgments ruin to your thrones denote.

LXXV.

Ye cleave to your old state, and still believe
Abandonment of shining sovereignties
Would argue weakness while these emblems weave
Assurance that your destiny defies
Assault from Hades' dim confed'racies,
Lapse of duration, or foreboding seer,—
And yet, how know ye, monarchs, that the guise
Of mystery which shrouds this penal sphere
Ye penetrate, and read with comprehension clear ?

LXXVI.

Before the Spartan's angury ye spurn,
I challenge ye to answer,—while the hand
Of ever-fashioning Nature ye discern
Mingling, on earth and through this mystic land,
The frightful with the beautiful and grand,—
The pleasant with the painful,—woe with joy,—
Perfection with decay,—hath she thus planned
The universal frame for a huge toy,
That she may, endlessly, be building to destroy ?

LXXVII.

Can ye at such sage judgment, kings, arrive—
That the vast Soul of all things works in sport
And mockery ? Or, is all preparative
Of some great issue, merely ? Inexpert
To make a universe that shall consort
Each part with each,—so that no blot shall mar
Its pure, consummate beauty,—Fraud malvert
Its boon design,—or Force diffuse foul jar
Through its blest harmonies,—judge ye the High Gods are ?

LXXVIII.

Or, rather, have they not in embryo left
The mighty macrocosm, for some great end
Of all-pervasive bliss to be vouchsafed
Hereafter ? Powers paternal that extend
Their providence to all, we apprehend
The sovereign gods to be ;—and ye will seem
Most like them, kings, if ye in pity bend
O'er earth and Hades, yearning to redeem
All being from woe,—and render Joy and Love supreme !—

LXXIX.

Thus spake Demosthenes, while kindred glow
Of earnest and fraternal love suffused
The visage of Themistocles, and threw
Such glory round, that some the cause espoused
He rose to plead, ere language had aroused
The intellective sense his theme to scan :—
As when, among earth's orators, hath choosed,
From some exterior grace, each partisan
His favourite, ere debate proclaims the nobler man.

LXXX.

Monarchs, your brotherhood with man I plead,—
He said ;—knowing no higher theme from whence
To argue that your essences self-freed
Should be from this false supereminence :
And, if that plea prevail not, eloquence
I lack to charm with guileful words the mind
Which knows no worship for the excellence
Of goodness. Kings, I plead for humankind !
Aid us our race in earth and Hades to unbind !

LXXXI.

It is to noblest, loftiest sacrifice
I call ye : sacrifice of selfish loves
And preferences—to swell the overbliss
Of all Humanity. Think ye, who proves
His truthful greatness thus, where'er he moves,
Shall not reap grateful reverence of more worth
Than all your pomps ? “Thee, brother, it behoves
“Our souls to love !—blest bringer of our mirth !”—
Bliss-throngs beholding him, with smiles, shall utter forth.

LXXXII.

Thy glauce significant, O Pontic chief !
Reminds me that on earth man's gratitude
Is slow of growth, and of existence brief,—
While patriot deeds, by jealousy misviewed,
Oft, for their guerdon, yield disquietude.
Great spirit ! magnanimity exalts
Man more, far more, than power : who hath subdued
Revenge for injuries, and o'er the faults
Of brethren with compassion yearns, wins blest results.

LXXXIII.

I dwell not on such thoughts : if I had wrong
From fatherland,—O name that wak'st the thrill
Of tenderest love !—wrong's slender sense hath long
Evanished. But, I ask, what wrong, in will,
Or word, or act, kings bear from man ? Deep ill
Monarchs have wrought each other,—but the race
Of Man hath revered the most imbecile
Of regal shapes,—nor ever sought to' abase
A monarch till he made his realm a charnel-place.

LXXXIV.

Nought have ye, then, to pardon,—but, to ask
 Forgiveness, rather. Yet, to see him lay
 His gorgeous gauds aside, and cease to bask
 In splendours wrung from woe, would throw a ray
 Of glory round a king so bright that they
 Who witnessed it would deem him all-divine,—
 And doubt he ever had borne evil sway.
 All Earth would honour him : his deed benign
 Spirits would magnify, through Hades' dim confine.

LXXXV.

O kings, be truly noble !—for the weal
 Of All, your high volition exercise,
 And burst, through Earth and Hades, the dark seal
 Of sympathy that binds their destinies
 For evil. Aid us in the bright emprise—
 Begun on earth, nor in these mystic realms
 Deserted—for we will antagonize
 With Wrong till vict'ry crowns our spir'tual helms,—
 And boundless love and joy the human spirit whelms !—

LXXXVI.

Tb' Athenian ended ; and the Hebrew king
 Raised his colossal form, with tremulous haste
 To tell how freely he away would fling
 All shows of grandeur, to repair the waste
 Of human bliss and see mankind embraced
 By boundless love.—
 Kings, Shophets, seers,—he said,—
 By ordinance Divine in Sheol placed
 On thrones and mystic seats, what can bestead
 The human soul from garish gauds thus round us spread ?

LXXXVII.

If on *our* wills the general bliss depend,
What can withhold that now we abdicate
These royalties,—the reign of Evil end—
The revelry of Wrong? And, wherefore wait
Till some more signal judgment consternate
Our essences?—Ye seem unmoved! and I
Doubt deeply whether zeal to' emancipate
Tophet and Earth from penal torment's cry
And suffering's groan—will meet the smile of the Most High!

LXXXVIII.

When Samuel, in my sight, to pieces hewed
The royal Agag, whom I longed to save,—
I saw that when Jehovah had a feud
With His poor human worm, He would not wave
His claim to justice,—but, upon the slave
Who dared to step between His holy wrath
And the doomed victim, He would vengeance have—
Slow,—signal,—sure! The Everlasting's path
Who can find out?—who comprehendeth what he saith?

LXXXIX.

His prophet did my humble head anoint,
And said the Lord had chosen me to rule:
Exterminating war God did appoint
On Amalek, next:—His ways are wonderful!
When I besought, at His Divine footstool,
Pardon for weakness, Agag's holy slayer
Said God did not repent like man!—How dull
Are our perceptions!—Did He not declare
Me monarch, and repent?—He who refused my prayer?

XC.

All,—all is mystery ! I sought no throne :—
 My father's asses, as I, following, roamed
 O'er the wide wilderness,—if on me shone
 The cheering sun, or sterile Nature gloomed,—
 A kingdom seemed to me :—but I was doomed
 To know the mockery of earthly bliss !—
 And is not Sheol mockery ?—We are wombed
 In dread and doubt,—fearing to do amiss,—
 And, to do well, lack power to burst our destinies !—

XCI.

Abruptly, in despair, thus ended Saul,
 And on his throne sank down ; while smoothly rose
 Achitophel, and round the regal hall
 Glanced,—then, obsequious, cringed, ere to disclose
 His wily soul, with sentence operose
 And tortuous, he began :—
 Potential Shades,
 And great Regalities,—he said ;—why lose
 In arguings vain,—since mystery being pervades,—
 The respite to deep pain Nature for ye here spreads ?

XCII.

Why thus afflict your essences with fears ?—
 Why droop, dispirited,—and pale, and shrink,—
 As if the soul were still a thing of tears,
 As when it wore earth's clay ? What, if some think,
 Or dream, that these imperial pomps shall sink
 To nought ?—Where is the doting prophet's proof
 Of his true inspiration ? Not a link
 Is broken that your thrones, with wonder-woof,
 Blends with these columned shapes, and this supernal roof.

XCIII.

Judgment hath fallen on the guilty seats
Of some: what then ? On earth stern judgments fell
On the incorrigible : guilt still meets
Its bad desert : this is naught new. Dispel
Your gloom, great kings, that in high thought excel,—
Soaring beyond the crowd ! Like eagles, preen
Your splendours, and this boding prophet quell
With wingèd vengeance ! Shall ye suffer teen,
Because this Gentile fantast thus doth overween ?

XCIV.

Monarchs are gods, in lustre and in strength :
Thrones were, and are, and shall be : they exist
By an eternal fitness : neither length
Of spiritual duration hath decreased
Their virtue, nor can captious casuist
Allege true reasons for their overthrow.
I challenge anarch revolutionist,—
By thoughts of reach, not dreams,—sound cause to shew
Why Thrones, in Sheol and on earth, to Change shall bow.

XCV.

Thou, regal Saul, spak'st of thy earthly course.
Know thou, that monarchs by good counsel stand,
And fall by evil rede. Changes, perforce,
Must come : young Comeliness will, aye, command
More love than Age : valour to wield the brand
More worship than sleek sloth : issue of joy
Awaiteth kingly acts in every land,—
Unless the monarch doth his heart upbuoy
By fulsome counsel, and his own fair peace destroy.—

XCVI.

Thus spake the Hebrew courtier-suicide,
And looked for plaudits ; —but, the Maccabee
Rose up in haste, his glozing strain to chide :—
This from Rebellion's counsellor do ye
Endure ? —he said ; —the flames of anarchy
Who blew with viperous breath — shall kings advice
Receive from him — the tool of Treachery ?
Shall not the part this hoary cockatrice
Played, while on earth, to prove his worthlessness suffice ?

XCVII.

Oh, monarchs, nobler, holier counsel take ! —
Not to wage spiritual war on the calm ghost
Of the Laconian, — vile revenge to slake ; —
Not of your gaudy pomps to swell and boast,
Regardless of the souls in Tophet tossed
In agony, and of Earth's myriads born
To pain, and in degrading cares engrossed : —
Oh, treat not thus the Spartan's words with scorn, —
If, by some deed of yours, mankind may cease to mourn !

XCVIII.

Oh, cleave no longer to these grandeurs vague, —
If they the jars and wounds of earth prolong, —
Slaughter and famine, pestilence and plague,
Bondage of weaker brethren to the strong,
Envy and hatred, robbery and wrong ! —
The bards on Judah's mountains, where we drew
The sword against our tyrants, in their song
Foretold Earth, one day, should be born anew, —
And smile with brotherhood of all, — Gentile and Jew.

XCIX.

And if, in Sheol, the Danaian's mind
 Survey the future with prophetic glance,—
 Discerning inmost sympathies that bind
 Earth's thrones with yours,—the deep significance
 Perceiving of strange shapes that but enhance
 'The wilderèd wonder of inferior souls,—
 Monarchs, resist not His high Puissance
 Who universal destiny controls,
 And, to His chosen ones, the fatal scroll unrols.—

C.

Thus Eleazar spake ; and Nicocles,
 The Paphian king, essayed, with gentle zeal,
 To aid like counsel :—
 That the stronger seize
 The weak,—he said,—and bruised nations feel
 The conqueror's burthen,—that victorious steel
 Bereaves the widow and the orphan child
 Of earthly hope and joy,—that human weal
 Is sacrificed to Power,—and Man is spoiled
 Of every good, by Wrong,—proofs Earth, for ages, piled.

CI.

And, while on earth thrones stand, monarchs will vie
 With monarchs, in excess of pomp and power,—
 Slavery and woe conquest will multiply,—
 And Death, in crescent shapes, mankind devour.
 Not before dreaming oracles I cower,
 Fearing more pain from ruin, but to purge
 Hades from present pain, and speed Earth's hour
 Of jubilee,—brothers, like suit I urge,
 That we in equal state these sceptred splendours merge!—

CII.

And I, spake Otho, join the fervid prayer,
And plead for preference of the general good
To sordid selfishness, and empty glare
Of unsubstantial shows: our brotherhood
With man demands it: while our thrones have stood
Thus mystically radiant, clouds of gloom
Have enwrapt millions,—brothers shed brothers' blood,—
And Toil's child found no refuge but the tomb!—
Spirits,—to quit these pomps, I give my instant doom!—

CIII.

Lo! while the Cyprian and the Roman spoke,
Transcendent glories decked their glowing brows,—
And joy-beams from the Spartan's count'nance broke,
That seemed a peerless light to circumfuse
On thrones and statues. Inly to arouse
His vengefulness, Achitophel essayed,—
But utterance failed,—and, shuddering with strange throes
Of some new torture that upon him preyed—
A ghastly sight he stood,—while kings looked on dismayed.

CIV.

Distorted grew his visage, limbs, and trunk,—
Though spiritual essence,—till they joined
His reptile seat;—and into it he shrunk
With grin horrific,—and, with it combined,
Crawled, prostrate:—hybrid monster undefined
In loathsome hideousness: a shape more strange
Than night-mared gourmand's glut-vexed brain e'er coined,—
Or madman formed, at full of moon, or change,—
Or bard, with frightfull'st phrenzies smit, could misarrange!

CV.

Slow waned the uncouth horror-spawn from sight
Of spirits, who, with stark marmorean look,—
Such as, at banquet, did the countenance blight
Of Pelops' son,—sat, with soul-palsy strook :—
And with such goading sense of self-rebuke
Ached the Cathaian and Assyrian kings,
Nile's queen, and paramour,—they could not brook
To be beheld,—but hid, like guilty things,
Their faces,—smitten with remorseful torturings.

CVI.

Kings' faces, now, with apprehension deep
Were filled,—and some, to wailing words gave vent ;—
When, like a veteran seaman who would keep
Undaunted heart, though sails and cordage rent,
And rudder broken, render impotent
The pilot's strength and skill,—and fear and grief
Burst from young sailors' tongues with eloquent
Expression of despair,—the Pontic chief,
Though shook, thus sought, with speech, to minister relief :—

CVII.

Spirits, I rise not to renew debate
On human rights, nor arguings to gainsay
Of those who favour new and equal state
In Hades and on earth. Let him who may
Contend 'gainst Nature's impulses that sway
The soul to tender and fraternal thoughts—
If Custom did not blight them in our clay,
And taint the spirit's essence. No cold doubts
Have I, that Men, as brothers, share like attributes :

CVIII.

Neither cleave I to kingship from regard
To Nature's great distinctions, though she gives
With choice, not blindly : genius of the bard
To one,—deep reach unto the sage who dives
Into her mysteries,—prerogatives
Of leadership, not less, to some who wield
A natural power o'er men—a strength that lives
And germs, within, compelling men to yield
Unto its forceful energy where'er revealed :

CIX.

I dwell not to repeat what hath been told—
How Nature thus elects,—casting, natheless,
Each human essence in so like a mould,
That all are brothers in their helplessness—
Children of Fate—driving to refugeless
Despair their kind, or being, themselves, driven.—
Maugre these thoughts, if mankind may possess
General beatitude when thrones are riven
From their foundations—let the judgment now be given !

CX.

Wherefore this pallor, brother Thrones ?—why faint
And fear ? When we threw off our mortal load
And gained these shores,—unlike what earth-dreams paint
Of life beyond the grave,—we were endowed,
At torture's lapse, with pomps, in kingly mode,
Ere we could choose. What guilt, then, have we nursed,
By wearing these regalities ?—what rod
Deserved ?—in what new penalties amerced
Shall spirits writhe ?—in what new regions be dispersed ?

CXI.

And wherefore fear, if such, for Nature's sport,
 Be destinies that wait us ? Let us meet
 Them calmly,—since we cannot controvert
 Our fate. I pause—to see upon his seat,—
 Neither unseptr'd nor discrowned, as yet,—
 Imperial Otho, and the Cyprian prince :—
 Wait they the Spartan's sign ? Why doth his threat
 Tarry in its fulfilment ? Monarchs, since [vince ?
 Thrones fade not,—wherefore should mere bodements us con-

CXII.

Wise men use omens for their ends, on earth,—
 While fools and weaklings see, or hear, and quake :—
 Star-gazers saw a comet, at my birth ;—
 And, at my father's death, I saw it shake
 Its fiery hair, as it the world would wake
 To see a king. The double omen served
 To fix expectant looks on me, and make
 My name, itself, a host :—that knowledge nerved
 My soul to combat Rome: my courage, else, had swerved.⁽¹¹⁾

CXIII.

Not to the fiery star,—but, to kind rule
 I trusted to infix my subjects' love ;
 And, while I left each astrologic fool
 To prate of hosts, he saw in heaven above,—
 Asia's vast swarms I sought, on earth, to move
 Against all-grasping Rome. Knowledge and Will
 Enable men and spirits oft to prove
 Superior to all circumstance of ill,—
 Aye, render them, by Fate itself, invincible.

CXIV.

Kings, if we quail, we draw destruction down :
Resolve preserves our state : unless I err,
The energy of will upholds each throne
In Hades, nor can prescient sorcerer
These dazzling seats from their foundations stir,
If we put forth resolve.—

He ceased, disturbed ;—

And though his words of resolution were,
His strength was weakness. No applause reverbed
Through the wide hall,—for, apprehension thought absorbed.

CXV.

Deep silence reigned, until the Spartan rose,
With godlike dignity, and thus began :—
Spirits, I triumph to foresee the close
Of Error's reign. Kings hold their last divan :
When next beneath this arch cerulean
We meet,—All will be equal ! But I cease
To prophesy ; and calmly trace the plan
Of sovereign Nature, since she seeks your peace,—
Your joy, Spirits !—that henceforth, endless, shall increase.

CXVI.

Error, from human ignorance darkly sprang.
As children misname things, and shout or shriek,
From pleasure or affright,—so mankind sang,
In rhapsodies of joy, the golden streak
Of morn ; and, when they heard the thunder speak,
Bowed down in awe, and wept. Infants in mind,
They marvelled,—and made gods of visage meek
Or terrible, and, then, to them assigned
Rule o'er the sun and cloud, the sky, and sea, and wind.

CXVII.

Thrones, likewise, sprang from human ignorance :—
Nature's rude elements presented war
For Man : rocks, earth-flames, ocean's vast expanse,
Storms, forests, savage beasts, were found to mar
Man's ease or rest : on every side a bar
Opposed itself, alike to further good,
Or present peace :—then, he an exemplar
Was held who overcame, by hardihood,
Lion or bear, horrors of cavern, flame, or flood.

CXVIII.

Such were old Earth's primeval monarchs : kings,
Leaders, by courage,—holding simple sway,—
If sway they held,—by useful compassings
Of larger means for nourishing man's clay.
O Mithridates, when I heard thee say
Some were born natural leaders, unto these
I turned,—the chiefs of patriarchal day,—
Comparing them with lords that Earth now sees,—
The puny hildings man approaches on his knees !

CXIX.

Cities were built, and man subdued the soil :—
But, now, Craft grew, and seized on mystery—
Life, death, sun, stars—all that the sons of toil
Saw without comprehending ;—and, with glee,
Secret but strong, saw Man a devotee
Become, credent and humble,—reverent laud
Rendering unto the Priest as lowlily
As to the gods this minister of fraud
Said he heard speak,—while men him listed, overawed.

CXX.

Then, between Priest and King grew contest rife
For mastership ; and Ganges and old Nile,—
Whose sacred servants foremost led the strife,—
Beheld the proof, in many a mighty pile
That decked their marges, how completely Guile
Could triumph over Strength. But, in the end,
Altar and Throne felt it unworth the while
To waste each other,—since, they shrewdly kenned
The prey enough for both :—so King called Priest—his friend!

CXXI.

Long, dreary, miserable years have fled,—
Since the foul compact first was ratified,
By Priestcraft placing on throned Kingship's head,
With hands in reeking blood of victim dyed,
The gaud of gold,—the sign of kingly pride,—
Long, dreary, suffering, weeping, wailing years:—
Oft have the bruised and trampled sufferers tried
To rise ;—but the Priest's curse woke inward fears,
And they bowed down again unto their toil with tears !

CXXII.

Yet, in some climes, the sufferers dared a deed
Of glorious boldness,—breaking Kingship's chain,
And,—standing upright, from their fetters freed,—
Sang songs of joy that o'er the purple main
Floated in triumph,—till the startling strain
Kings heard in other lands, and called their slaves
To arm, and quell the sacrilegious train ;—
And, often, when their menials crossed the waves,
They gained, in patriot-land, not conquest—but, their graves.

CXXIII.

But, Treason germed, even in Freedom's womb ;
And Power and Craft were born again—the twin
Ubiquities of Evil that still gloom
The bleeding world, and widely o'er it win
Accursed sway. Thus, ever to begin
Anew was Freedom's struggle ; and the proud
Duality of Thralldom did but grin
And mock, at length,—thinking the strugglers cowed
By loss, and sunk into a helpless, murmuring crowd.

CXXIV.

Hence, out of Evil, Good hath grown,—for, now,
Good shall begin to overcome. The strong
Become remiss, the weak to overthrow
Their masters, and redeem themselves from wrong
Safely aspire. Thus, Right its sinews strung
Afresh while Might securely slept, or woke
For dalliance and debauch : thus, Right grown young
And strong, by hardship, will throw off the yoke
Of hoary Might too palsied to withstand the shock.

CXXV.

Say ye, Right's triumph, like a dream, shall fade,
'Neath swift rewaking vigour of throned Power ?—
Monarchs, be not deceived ! Right, now, hath aid
From Knowledge—hid by priests in secret bower,
And when thence 'scaped, caught, and to dungeon-tower
By them condemned—yea, to the fiery flame !—
They knew not of her high immortal dower,
The veritable Phœnix—whom to tame,
Or to destroy, will ever mock old priestly aim !

CXXVI.

Lo ! she hath ta'en young Freedom by the hand,—
And, in the strength and comeliness of youth,
Supplanting Craft and Power in every land,
And heralding the reign of Love and Truth,
They go ! Yet little reck they of the growth
Of Right and Knowledge, who the glorious pair
Regard not :—the besotted shapes uncouth
That dream, like age-crampt spiders in their lair,
Their cobweb safe,—though winds sport with it in the air.

CXXVII.

And ye, in Hades, monarchs, though beholding
Judgments on monstrous vice, are slow to yield.
Meanwhile, on earth, like judgments are unfolding,—
For, thus, in mystic sympathy upsealed,
Of mortal men and spirits unannealed
The destinies remain ;—and, soon,—though Might,
Counting her hirelings trapping'd, hors'd, and steeled,
The judgments mocks to scorn,—a total blight
On Power, and Craft, and lordly Privilege shall light.

CXXVIII.

Ye by your own great deed, kings, can avert
The threatened ruin. Let the glowing themes
Of brotherhood, before ye urged, exhort
Ye to denude your spirits of their dreams
Of selfish good,—to cast your diadems
And sceptres down,—resolved the grand emprise
To aid of glorious Goodness ! I see beams
Of high resolve dawn from your essences !—
Though, still, in some, old Prejudice doth agonize !

CXXIX.

How vain that agony ! The strains of truth
And loving earnestness, full souls have poured
Forth to your thought, shall work within ye ruth
For human woe ;—and, soon, resolve matured
Shall be within ye to make firm accord
With Mercy's gentle champions :—for, it hath
Been here proclaimed, that some have long explored
The way to end Man's misery, strife, and wrath,
And bring in Peace,—if, happ'ly, they might find the path.

CXXX.

And, brothers, here we solemnly obtest
The Sovereignities of Nature that the toil
We will not end, till Men and spirits blest
Hold general jubilee !—

He said ;—and, while
He stretched aloft his hand,—from motley pile
And throne, great souls arose, and instant raised
A hand aloft—each with a godlike smile !—
And light empyreal from each Essence blazed,
Until I woke,—with the bright vision soul-bedazed !

NOTES TO BOOK THE SIXTH.

(1) Stanza 3.—Six human beings underwent capital punishment in front of Stafford Gaol, during the two years I remained in it. The entire procedure in any one instance, of course, I could not witness: on one occasion, only,—when, on account of the early hour and season of the year, I had not been removed from my night-cell,—I beheld the grim preface to the legal butchery. Without repeating the testimonies of reflecting men who have attended executions, as to the hardening effect of those savage spectacles,—I will just observe that while the sound of the death-bell for the first execution filled me and my fellow-prisoners with paroxysms of distress,—on the second, third, and fourth occasions, we became comparatively unconcerned. And, when I was left a solitary prisoner, the sound of the death-bell for the last time, created a few bitter thoughts of the abhorrent and uncivilised nature of the impending tragedy; but a kind of careless disgust followed, from the instant reflection that all *my* dislike of the brutal transaction, was vain. And, within ten minutes after the death-bell had ceased, I actually caught myself humming “The Banks and Braes o’ bonny Doon!” Now, a more sensitive and excitable human creature than myself, perhaps, does not exist: but there is the honest fact—such as startled me by its strangeness, at the time:—let the advocates for the usefulness of capital punishments as ‘impressive moral lessons’ make what they can of it.

(2) Stanza 6.—Compare Exodus, Chap. 21, verse xxiv., and Matthew, chap. 5, and verses xxxviii, xxxix.

(3) Stanza 45.—The younger Marius.—For affirmation of his suicide see Appian de Bellis Civilibus, lib. 1, c. 94.

(4) Stanza 46—Photius.—“A secret remnant of Pagans, who still lurked in the most refined and most rustic condition of mankind, excited the indignation of the Christians, who were perhaps unwilling that any strangers should be witnesses of their intestine quarrels. A bishop was named as the inquisitor of the faith, and his diligence soon discovered in the court and city, the magistrates, lawyers, physicians, and sophists, who still cherished the superstition of the Greeks. They were sternly informed that they must chuse, without delay, between the displeasure of Jupiter or Justinian, and that their aversion to the gospel could no longer be disguised under the scandalous mask of indifference or impiety. The patrician Photius, perhaps alone, was resolved to die like his ancestors: he enfranchised himself with the stroke of a dagger, and left his tyrant the poor consolation of exposing with ignominy the lifeless corpse of the fugitive.”—Gibbon, chap. 47.

(5) Stanza 47—“A pard, with hide besprent, like that gruff Scythian by Ceres changed:”—Lyncus.—Ovid, *Metam.*, lib. 5, v. 660. To Ovid's simple expression, “*Lynca Ceres fecit*,”—it is added in the notes to Lemaire's edition, “Hyginus, fab. 259: *Ceres eum convertit in lyncem varii coloris ut ipse variae mentis exstiterat*.”

(6) Stanza 48—“And feet of beast that marred the seer,” &c.—See 1 Kings, 13 chap. xxiv. xxv.

(7) Stanza 49.—Razis.—See 2nd Maccabees, ch. 14., v. 37—46, for an account of his wild suicide.

(8) Stanza 49.—“Arbogastes, after the loss of a battle (*won by Theodosius*), in which he had discharged the duties of a soldier and a general, wandered several days among the mountains. But when he was convinced that his cause was desperate, and his escape impracticable, the intrepid barbarian imitated the example of the ancient Romans, and turned his sword against his own breast.”—Gibbon, chap. 27.

(9) Stanza 55.—“On earth, I toiled a menial slave by night.”—Cleanthes, is a noble Greek example of mind triumphing over difficulties. He was at first a “fisty-cuffer,”—as the old translators phrase it, in the edition of Diogenes Laertius ‘made English by several hands:’ 1696;—“but coming to Athens, with no more than four drachmas in his pocket, and meeting with Zeno, he betook himself most sedulously to the study of

Philosophy, &c.” “By night (says Enfield, who renders Lærtius more elegantly) he drew water as a common labourer in the public gardens, that he might have leisure, in the day-time, to attend the schools of philosophy. The Athenian citizens observing that though he appeared strong and healthy, he had no visible means of subsistence, summoned him before the court of Areopagus, according to the custom of the city, to give an account of his manner of living. Upon this he produced the gardener for whom he drew water, and a woman for whom he ground meal, as witnesses to prove that he subsisted by the honest labour of his hands. The judges of the court were so struck with admiration of this singular example of industry and perseverance, that they ordered ten *minæ* to be paid him out of the public treasury,—which, however, Zeno would not suffer him to accept. . . . Cleanthes was for many years so poor, that he was obliged to write the heads of his master’s lectures upon shells and bones, for want of money to buy paper.”—The suicide of this philosopher, at a very advanced age, was singularly quiet and yet heroic. His physicians recommended fasting for some disease with which he was afflicted; and having abstained from food for two days, although he had thus subdued his disorder, he refused to eat again, saying that since he had travelled so far towards the end of life he would not go back again,—and, accordingly, died by voluntary ‘total-abstinence.’—The testimonies to the elevated morality of his life are abundant.

(10) Stanza 62.—The last lines of this stanza were composed under an impression that an earthquake or violent tempest signalized the birth of Nero, Caligula, Domitian, Elagabalus, or some one of the monsters who presided over the Roman world. Memory, it seems, betrayed me; and I had no means of correcting my inaccuracy, in prison.—The mistake, however, does not seem of such importance as to demand that I strike out the lines of the stanza, or substitute others for them.

(11) Stanza 112.—The comets which appeared at the birth of Mithridates, and at the period of his ascension of the throne of Pontus, together with their significance of the future greatness of this remarkable potentate (whom Cicero terms the greatest that ever reigned) are alike matter of the gravest history:—“*Hujus futuram magnitudinem etiam cælestia ostenta prædixerant. Nam et quo genitus est anno, et eo quo regnare primum cæpit, stella cometes per utrumque tempus septuaginta diebus ita luxit, ut cælum omne conflagrare videretur—&c.*” Justin. Hist. lib. 37. cap. 2.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

I.

London ! how imageable seems the strife
Of thy huge crowds amid this solitude !
Instinct with hot, heart-feverous, throbbing life,—
Racers for Mammon,—day by day renewed,—
Quick, motley actors in Mind's interlude,—
They flit before me ; or, again, I walk
Wonder-lost less with glare and magnitude
Of mindless things than human shapes that stalk
Through thy vast wilderness of ways, and, smiling, talk

II.

With their own wretchedness which hath estranged
Them from their kind, but cannot stifle dreams
That Beggary's rags shall, one day, be exchanged
For Grandeur's robes, and Fortune's favouring beams
Gild their last hours. These, these, amid thy streams
Of populousness, thy lavish shews of pride,
And pomp, and equipage, were living themes
For healthiest thought that did my folly chide
When I, along thy streets, a gazing 'venturer, hied.

III.

Oh ! if the heart doth crave for loneliness,
Deep in thy crowded desert it may find
Its drear wish realised. In Misery's dress,—
Their blighted visages to humankind
A pregnant lesson, but their names enshrined,
Perchance, in secrecy,—how stealthily
Such hermits of the heart glide on behind
The bustling men of gain, or groups of glee
That swell thy blended throngs of thrift and gaiety !

IV.

Oft have I followed such a stealthy form,
To mark his whereabouts of rest or home,
Until he plunged into some haunt where swarm,—
In dingy dens, that shadow forth the gloom
Of hearts within,—what the World calls its 'scum'—
Victims of gilded fraud, and titled lust,
And pensioned knavery ! Will it e'er come—
The hour when Man shall venture to be just,
And dare to give true names unto his fellow-dust ?

V.

Age after age hath gazed the eager throng,—
As, now, I seem, again, to see it gaze,—
Heedless of moral worth, or right or wrong,
While haughty Pomp unclosed its newest blaze
Of tear-wrung splendour : and, perchance, to praise
Of garish shew, blame for great gold misspent
Hath followed, as it follows now : yet, raise
The trump of pageantry,—and ears are lent
By thousands who lisp scorn for 'Time's old rabblement !

VI.

Will knowledge, freedom, moral growth of man,
Strip off these swaddling-bands of gauze,—these chains
Of gossamer? This baby-talisman—
Will it much longer charm the child of pains
And sweat, to leave his bread-toil? Oh! there reigns
Of strength in Labour's millions, a young breath
That gaunt Starvation quells not—but sustains!—
Where, now, my memory wanders, may its wrath
Ne'er burst!—Monarch!—adown thy stately palace-path!

VII.

I saw thee on the day thou wast a bride,—
And shouted, 'mid my joy-tears, with the crowd:—
Thou wert a woman,—and thou satt'st beside
Thy bosom's choice,—while happiness o'erflowed
Thy heart, and in thy fair young countenance glowed.
Beholding thine, what could I less than feel
A sympathetic joy? Aye, though a prond
Worship of England's stern old Commonweal
Was mine,—for thee, that day, I breathed devotion leal.

VIII.

And many a heart, yielding, that festive day,
To Nature's impulses of hope and joy,
Confiding, blessed thee! Queen! if thou delay
To help thy Poor,—if thou, thyself, destroy
The promise of that time, and harsh alloy
Of blame with memory of our joy now blend—
What marvel?—Hopes, that do the heart upbuoy,
Turned to despair by sufferings slighted, rend
All gentle feelings in their way to some dire end.

IX.

When next thou passest by Whitehall, look up,
I pray thee, and remember who felt there
The fatal axe! Aye,—look!—nor be the dupe
Of tinselled traitors who would thee ensnare
To ease and grandeur, till—thy People's prayer
For justice all too long delayed—they rise
With that old heart the Stuart to despair
Drove, first,—and, then, to vengeance! Hunger cries
Throughout thy realm—'Queen! from the fearful Past—be wise!'

X.

I know that tellers of plain truths are 'Goths'
And 'savages' in their esteem who haunt
The halls of royalty—the pageant moths
That flutter in thy beams,—the sycophant,
The beau, the coronetted mendicant:—
Yet, speak I not from brutal nature;—nor
Is thirst for violence fell habitant
Of Labour's children's hearts. Queen! they who store
Thy mind with such belief wrong grievously thy Poor!

XI.

Believe one born amid their daily toils
And sighs,—and, since, observant of the words
And deeds of those who live on Labour's spoils:—
Thy Poor, it is,—and not their haughty lords,—
In whose hearts vibrate gentle Nature's chords
Of tenderness for thee,—ev'n while they groan
With deepest wrongs. 'We suffer by the hordes
'Of selfish ones,' they say, 'that hide the throne:
'If *she* could *know* our woes—we should not, vainly, moan!'

XII.

Lady ! 'tis thus the hunger-bitten ones
Their simple, lingering trust in thee express :—
Let thy heart answer, 'mid superb saloons
And soldiered pomp,—with truth and faithfulness,—
If thou deserv'st this trust from comfortless
And bread-pinched millions ! Wouldst thou read aright
Thy glory ?—Seek to be the heritress
Of love deserved,—choosing, with noble slight
Of gauds, to make the Poor's heart-smile thy sole delight.

XIII.

Alas ! in vain thus breathes a rebel thrall
Fond wish that, now a thousand years have rolled,
To Alfred's land it might, once more, befall
That sum of human glories to behold—
A monarch scorning blood-stained gauds and gold,
'To build the throne in a blest People's love !
It may not be ! Custom, soul-numbing, cold,
Her web hath round thee, from thy cradle wove :—
Can heart of a born-thrall with pulse of Freedom move ?

XIV.

Deadly, mind-blighting influences begird
Thee daily, hourly : 'tis thy lot. A gaol
Is mine. Thus far, our lot how like !—the herd
Of titled, starred, and sworded things, that fail
Not to enclose thee in their watchful pale,
Are but thy chief and under-turnkeys. Thou
By birth, for life,—and I, by force,—this bale
Of bondage prove. Rebel, or Queen, we bow
Alike to circumstance : our mould to it we owe.

XV.

Oh ! who shall mete due blame to things of earth ?
When, passing from that palace, heart-felt ire
Doth rise, viewing a shame on royal birth
Becolumned on that spot of moral mire,—
When burneth momentary, rash desire
To see him and the elder-born there swing
On an eternal gibbet,—if the fire
O'th' heart flasheth within, will it not fling
On conscience home reproof, and wholesome chastening.

XVI.

Hadst thou who glancest on that pillared Shame
Been, like him, next of kin to Infamy
In royal robes,—scant-minded,—without aim
Cast on the gaudy world that sought with glee
To tempt or gratify his lust,—in thee
Would the poor soldier, or his orphan-child,
Or beggar'd widow, in their misery,
So oft have found a heart whose glow beguiled
Their tears with bounteous help until the mourners smiled ?

XVII.

Alas ! *from* tears this balm of tears was wrung !
Millions on millions toiled and pined and wept
To clothe with Murder's panoply the young—
The thoughtless— who to swift destruction leapt,
Or back to home with maimed bodies crept—
Winners of 'Glory' !—while, to toil and weep
Was still the millions' lot : if Death had swept
Off thousands,—blood-garbed thousands more must leap
Into the breach : War,—Madness,—must their harvest reap !

XVIII.

Dash down ? —Nay, rear more shameless columns ! high
And higher still ! Ye are but niggard carles
Who taste the fruit of ‘ Glory ’ ! To the sky
Lift up ten thousand trophies,—till it whirls
Our blood to see them , and the foreigner gnarls
His fingers in hot shame ! Why do ye spare
A corner ’neath yon mighty dome, for churls
Like Howard, Reynolds, Jones, and Johnson ? Tear
The low quaternion down !—Why stand their dull forms there ?

XIX.

’Tis Glory’s temple !—Glory—whose great brood
Escape the gallows by a broidered coat
And larger knife wherewith to shed the blood
Of brothers ! What meek traitor hither brought
Philanthropy and Art, Genius and Thought,—
To stain the mausoleum of the great
And grand in murder ?—Cast the cowards out !
Their effigies do only tribulate
His joy who here beholds what poms on ‘ heroes ’ wait !

XX.

Briton ! gaze deeply on the marbled crowd—
Forgetting the mean four ! Oh ! let it swell
Thy veins with ecstasy to view this proud
Array of warriors,—some, as if they fell
But now, in Victory’s arms, beneath the knell
Of Fate,—some, girt with blazonry of brand,
Pike, cannon, war-ship, or brute shape that well
Shews slaughter was their trade ! While peal those grand
Deep diapasons,—bow, and reverence Glory’s band !

XXI.

What matter that yon vocal instruments
Join the loud organ's thunder ? 'Tis for bread
They chaunt of 'mercy,'—poor subservients !—
Bread, that their pampered masters, in whose stead
They do this meaningless day-drudgery, spread
In measure scant for each poor breath-machine,—
Shunning the task that irks both heart and head—
To hymn the pitying thorn-crowned Nazarene
Where laurelled Murder holds high pomp with marbled mien !

XXII.

Dost thou refuse to reverence Carnage vast,
And hie thee back where glooms yon elder fane,
Shrouding the mouldered great ones of the Past,
With all its solemn glories of dyed pane
And carven stone ? Ah ! Briton, who wouldst fain,
Where sleep thy country's truly glorious few,
In that dim 'corner,' joy in awe ;—restrain
Thy heart ! Fraud must to Force, its twin, be true :—
Mind must be bann'd, like Childe : they'll welcome Waterloo !

XXIII.

Perchance the Priest forbodes his end is near,—
Unless he come less lazily with aid
To stem the torrent in whose strong career
Thrones, altars, may be whirled ! Shall they be stayed—
Thought's whelming waves ?—Can Priestcraft's joint crusade
With Carnage, against Mind,—arrest its course ?—
Oh, 'let them grapple,'—as the great one said,—
'Falsehood and Truth' !—awhile Fraud linkt with Force
May boast ! but Truth shall one day, 'put' them 'to the worse' !

XXIV.

Let priest with warrior,—old comates in rule,
Join hands, and tear from vault and niche and shrine,
From pedestal in fane and vestibule,
The Heroes of the Mind ! Let them assign
Sole honour to the puissant Butcher line
Throughout wide earth, beneath high heaven :—the day
Will come when the triumphing sun shall shine
On earth renewed : not always shall his ray
Gild Murder's monuments : they surely shall decay !

XXV.

Oh ! what wilt thou be, then, my country, 'mong
The nations ?—Shakspeare's home, and Alfred's realm,—
Land where our Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, sung,—
Where infant Truth decked Wickliffe's warrior-helm,—
Where Bacon burst Man's age-worn spirit-film,—
Footstool of Newton while he spanned the sky,—
Cradle of glorious names that fill and whelm
A Briton's heart with love, and pride, and joy,—
Wilt thou be great and glorious, then,—freed from alloy

XXVI.

Of all thy old, mistaken strife to be
Glorious and great ? Wilt thou above the wave
Then bare thy generous breast,—Nurse of the Free,
Alone—extinct the Tyrant and the Slave,—
And filled with Brother-Men, not beings that crave
To see the murderer of one brother hang,—
Yet vaunt the 'glory' of each carnage-grave,
From Agincourt to Waterloo, where sang
The trumpet over thousands in their hearts' death-pang ?

XXVII.

Will truthful greatness crown thy hoary age,—
Or desert-savagery its reign resume
Wide over thee,—and to the bard or sage
Of far off clime, new-born from mental gloom
Hereafter, even Shakspeare's name become
A worn-out glory,—or, like Orpheus' lyre,
Fade into fable? On thy future doom
Thy children, England! ponder, with desire.—
Though vainly buried millions burned with kindred fire!

XXVIII.

Another day of dreams is gone!—yet must the sun
Bring other flowers than these cold things of Spring,—
Poor, puny prisoners, that, to look upon
Raise tears,—ere Time to me shall hither bring
The hour of Freedom.—How we still do cling
Unto the world, as if we yet might find
Therein substantial joy!—

Fancy took wing,
Again, in sleep; and, in the realms assigned
To suicidal souls, wandered the sleepless Mind.

XXIX.

Methought I passed adown the sculptured aisle,
With a new band of ghostly travellers
Whose visages were clad with smirk and smile,
Although they looked as if earth's sepulchres
Had newly cast them out: mirthsome compeers
In grave-clothes, on they tripped, with glee more grim
Than if a troop of monks or caloyers,
Smit with some sudden madness or wild whim,
Were seen to laugh and dance unto a funeral hymn.

XXX.

And, when the span of the huge dome they raught,
In circle the strange crew took hands, and round
They whirled, with laughter and delirious shout,
Until the vault,—'neath which I heard no sound
Before,—gave back such mirth as did astound
These revellers in shrouds ;—whereat they wailed
And wildly wept, and, each, the deathly wound
By his own hand inflicted, swift, unveiled,
And fiercely on himself for mad self-murderer railed !

XXXI.

A silent sorrow, then, their essence clothed,
And slowly from beneath the dome they passed,
With eyes that told how achingly they loathed
Prolonged existence, and how fain would cast
Its bondage off, with their old guilty haste,
In spite of self-upbraidings, if the soul
Were brittle as earth's clay. Upon a waste
The wanderers emerged, and sought some goal
Where, with life-wantons like themselves, they might condole.

XXXII.

Laurels of conquerors, chaplets of vain bards,
Bracelets of beauties, diadems of kings,
Lay shivered on the waste with porcelain shards,
And fractured counterfeits of jewelled rings,
And robes in rags : of all Earth's gaudy things
Some image there lay mangled, marred, or rent ;—
And, as they trod upon these symbolings
Of their past pride, on mortal life misspent [ment.
The travellers thought, and sighed, with grievous languish-

XXXIII.

A strand they reached, with waters sluggish, shallow,
And strown with weed-grown walls where human mopes
Reclined,—while others idly 'gan to wallow
In the dull wave : a realm of misanthropes
It seemed,—for none his neighbour told what hopes
Or fears he had, or doubts or wishes : all
Lugubrious silence kept, and drooped, as droops
The brooding thing who doth his soul enthrall
With hates, till he thinks all men's veins, like his, hold gall.

XXXIV.

Part of the dreary band with which I marched
Clomb those dank walls, fording the shallow stream,
And lay them vilely down ;—a remnant searched
Along the beach for spot that they might deem
More meet for resting-place :—these, in my dream,
I companied, until a bay they neared,
From whence, discerned by an unearthly gleam
Of lurid light, huge, half-sunk towers appeared,—
And pinnacles their points from out the waters reared.

XXXV.

And here, methought, we halted, by a groupe
Of ghosts that sat upon a ledge of rock
Listlessly watching the gray ruins stoop
Unto their fall among the waves that broke
With leaden weight against their sides. None spoke
A welcome, or unto our stay gave heed,—
But gazed still drowsily on. Within me woke
Desire to know them ; but, the soul, though freed
From clay, on this dull shore seemed outward lore to need.

XXXVI.

Here, spirit shared no powers intuitive :
So gross it grew, that for old mortal sense
The mind longed, painfully, when it would give
Unto its neighbour mind some evidence
That it still held its being : will, vehemence,
Fire, energy, the soul no longer felt :
Cold, carking consciousness of indigence
Of thought,—from waste with which it had misdealt
Its opulence on earth,—within the spirit dwelt.

XXXVII.

One of the listless groupe, at length, began
To murmur sounds—for spirit was too weak,
In this low realm, to beam forth thought, or scan
The thoughts of others if they did not speak :—
And then another murmured, till apeak
Each raised himself to listen,—I, to learn
Who spoke ;—when three, I saw by their antique
Eagle-beaked faces, were of Rome th' Eterne,—
Two of gay France,—two of my fatherland more stern.

XXXVIII.

And by observance of a dull dispute
That rose from murmurs to less slumberous words,
I found out Nero's lewdly dissolute
Comate, Sophonius, who, when Galba's guards
Sought for his guilty life, forestalled their swords.⁽¹⁾
Here leant he, by the Tyrant's ' Arbiter
' Of Elegancies,'—whom the Muse records
For polished verse,—Ill Fame for panderer
To Rome's imperial beast of lust and massacre.⁽²⁾

XXXIX.

That proverb with them sat,—the Epicure
 Of epicures,—he who through fear of want
 Destroyed the carcase he could not manure
 Sufficiently with garbage, from the scant
 Tenth of a million,—which this cormorant
 From gormandizing spared.⁽³⁾ Buffoon confest,
 Leant, by Apicius, the hair-brained Mordaunt,—
 England's fine fool,—all Europe's courtly guest
 Who paid his debts,—then blew his brains out for a jest!⁽⁴⁾

XL.

Lumley was there, a 'noble lord,' in life,⁽⁵⁾
 Who his kept mistress to distraction loved,
 Yet, having pledged his troth to take for wife
 A lady chaste his thoughtful choice approved,
 Grew crazy with dilemma—till it moved
 His hand to solve the puzzle which his mind,—
 Too delicately sensitive,—beloved
 To solve: he seemed a lord of extinct kind:—
 Certes, lords now no puzzle in such troth-pledge find!

XLI.

Vatel, who cut his throat to shun the stain
 Of not being able sumptuously to store
 The supper-table for his guests;⁽⁶⁾—with vain
 Villeneuve,—Napoleon's admiral,—who bore
 Disgrace so oddly that he flew to lore
 Of stern anatomy with aim to know—
 What he both learnt and practised—how the core
 Of life a pin may pierce, with one quick throe;⁽⁷⁾
 Two spirits truly French made up the groupe I saw.

XLII.

Nero's two courtiers soon their contest ended,—
Apicius spoke not,—and the mopes of France,
With Lumley, on the rock their shadows bended,
As if o'ercome by that clime's puissance
Of dullness,—or, because all esperance,
They thought, was fled, for them, of happy change :
But soon, Mordaunt began quaint utterance
To give unto his piebald musings strange :—
And thus did he his motley images arrange :—

XLIII.

Petronius, though our mystic lot be placed
In this dull realm where sight and sound combine
Our sensories, for aye, to overcast
With brooding phantasies, and saturnine
Despairs,—or, else, as with an anodyne
Of thought, to lull us into listlessness ;—
Let us, again, essay to intertwine
Some shreds of brightness with the sombre dress
Our spirits wear in this drear land of languidness.

XLIV.

Tell us some jest of old careering Rome,
With its monstrosities of apish men,
Who ever seemed desirous to become
Something that was not human. What a den
Of horror must thy prince have made it, when
He lit it up to see a merry blaze !—
And yet, 'twas but a change : from outward ken
Shut up, horrors as deep, in the foul ways
O' th' heart, were witnessed daily by man's inner gaze.

XLV.

What Europe's modern folds of rogues and fools
Display, thy olden city must have shewn—
Strife murderous as the sword—but waged with tools
Of deadlier structure—tongues venomed to' impugn
All humble virtues—oiled to gloss o'ergrown
And hideous vice, and help it to pursue
Its course of lust and blood. Thy prince hath won
A name will never die : the lot of few
Who humbly toil for good, and selfish wrong eschew.

XLVI.

Such weaklings win but scorn ; and so 'twas shrewd
In thy magnificent incendiary
To use a masterstroke should teach the brood
Of puny things to come what 'twas to be
Acute in wit : for no dexterity
Of after-men can now the name destroy
Of fiddling, murdering Nero,—
Cease thy glee !
Returned the Roman,—or thy tongue employ
On themes that will thy hapless fellows less annoy.

XLVII.

The prince thou slander'st had a noble soul,
Although eccentric : hireling scribes defamed
Him, or the world would his great deeds extol,
Not censure. Man's advance he always aimed
To hasten : wisdom, art, song, music claimed
Him ever as their blandest, truest friend ;
And, in the deed thou hast so lightly named,
His purposes were princely : a quick end
He put to ugliness that did with beauty blend :—

XLVIII.

Filth-nests with palaces—that erst distilled
 Their feculent odours on the air, and spread
 Nausea and death. Thon shouldst have seen Rome filled
 With homes of stateliness and grace, instead
 Of mere mud-huts of squalor : 'twould have bred
 In thee much admiration (⁸)——

And the cost,—
 Resumed Mordant,—was trifling : to the dead
 Those who were burnt Decay would soon have tossed,—
 And Death, doubtless, preferred the speedier holocaust.

XLIX.

Filth-nests ! why, aye ;—and the mere wingless fowls —
 I'd term them such, did the old Cynic sneer,
 As in wise Plato's face, (⁹)—the dirty thralls
 Were of no worth. Besides, how vain it were
 Of the birds' filthy nests fair Rome to clear,
 And yet to leave the filth-birds ! Thus, brave War
 Is the world's health's effectual pioneer,
 As well as burning : Earth, it doth not mar,
 But mend—to bruise it, now and then, with Slaughter's car.—

L.

Spite of thy jeers, —Villeneuve, inclined to wrath,
 Took up the strife, and said,—War hath its use
 As well as honours : harvest and aftermath
 Are rendered plenteous by the tide diffuse
 Of blood : the vulture's leavings do conduce,
 As well, to fertilize the barren earth,—
 Which might, but for the timely stream let loose
 On it, become one general mass of dearth,—
 Nor yield another grain for things of human birth.

LI.

Thus doth the carnage of the field assist
Great Providence. Nay, more : the lord of fight
Is Nature's mightiest, best phlebotomist :
'Tis well that the fell falchion doth alight
On thousands, and more slaughterous nitre blight
Myriads of crawling things :—what would the world
Grow, but a putrid swarm, in the vast flight
Of years,—if oft the warrior's flag unfurled
The sun saw not, nor smiled on crowds to swift death hurled ?

LII.

And, if Earth's youth the sword did not thus sweep
Away by thousands, in what woe and want,
What scorn and rags, would many of them creep
To helpless age ? But, next, the combatant
Regard with Glory fired—
Nay,—said Mordaunt,—
Mar not thy theme ; for thou hast pictured well
The truest commendations War can vaunt :
Slide not to farce :—thou never wilt excel
The argument, though tragic, we have heard thee tell.

LIII.

Such were the shameless reas'nings of the Strong
For murdering the Weak, I heard in life :
And yet these very reas'ners pale at wrong
Wrought by the lone assassin with the knife :
These very men whose arguments are rife
Of aiding mystic Providence, by huge
Assassination ! That such hateful strife
Of inconsistency we fled, I grudge
Not,—though it be for aye in this dull zone to lodge.—

LIV.

And I judge otherwise,—with lazy speech
 The suicidal glutton 'gan to break
 His moody silence :—could I old Earth reach
 Again, at will, I quickly would forsake
 'This clime that fits perception so opaque
 As thine. Why wonder at aught strange or mad
 They do or say on Earth ? Do they not make
 A thing for worship that they say doth add
 To being merely to destroy by th' myriad ?

LV.

And justify they not his deathful laws
 By the same logic we have heard but now ?
 'All things hath framed this great uncaused Cause,'—
 'They say,—' to prey upon each other, through
 ' Benevolent design to save from throe
 ' Of helpless age and lingering death : and thus,'—
 Say they,—' when men the universe of woe
 ' And murder view, and shudder,—vision gross
 ' Leads them to term its kindly beauty—hideous.'

LVI.

If such their model of perfection be,
 How canst thou wonder, if, with kindness
 Like his to whom in awe they bow the knee,
 'Their human slaughter-shapes they drape and dress ?'
 Mordaunt,—I ever laughed at answerless
 Priest-riddles, and unto the joys of sense
 And appetite betook me ; and possess
 'Them now I would, if this new residence
 Of being, and its laws, compelled not abstinence

LVII.

And as thou think'st, Apicius, so think I,—
Said dull Tigillinus ;—sense, and its joy,—
But nought beside on earth,—are worth a sigh :
They rendered Life worth having, though alloy
Was mingled with it : he who was least coy
Of these true pleasures, was, in my esteem,
The wisest man : aye, he who from a boy
Led life of revel,—filling up his dream
With merriment—daring the rapids of Life's stream.

LVIII.

So judged I that our prince lived by the rule
Of truest wisdom : could I once more share
His favour and his joys, I would not pule
At the world's contradictions, like this rare
Sample of folly, who with haste so yare
Fled hither from wealth's, pleasure's lavishment,
In quest of dark remediless despair :—
Rome knew not such a lunatic : content
We were to live,—'less ill with good was overblent.——

LIX.

Ye may bepraise yourselves,—Mordaunt replied ;
But I regard ye as twin swine—for nought
More noble ye resemble : things of pride
And filthiest greed ye be ; and Earth o'erfraught
With such as ye becomes the irksome spot
It is, and hath been. Nature doth contain
No greater mystery than that with thought
Such grovelling clay she doth endow : the chain
Of mire and mind ye link : your being else is vain.——

LX.

Is not our life,—all life,—as vain as theirs ?
 Asked Lumley,—while the Romans sank supine
 And slumberous, on the rock :—we were the heirs
 Of Vanity on earth ; and this confine
 Of wretchedness affords no cheering sign
 That we shall e'er attain a nobler state—
 Although some fable it who still entwine
 Earth's credulous dreams with doubt, and console
 This miserable being' with emulous debate.——

LXI.

And what, if such debate high truths evolve
 We wot not of ?—earnestly asked Vatel :
 My mind doth much misgive 'twas rash resolve
 That guided our refusal to hear tell
 Of others' hopes, if we have bid farewell
 To esperance ourselves—

Nurse no regret,
 So infantile,—said Lumley ;—but dispel
 Its weakness : ne'er can dreams in me beget
 A ray of hope that we shall 'scape from Torture's net.

LXII.

It is a universe designed for sorrow—
 Designed ift be ;—and if it rose by chance,
 'Tis still as vile. I wish a vast death thorough
 All life would penetrate, until expanse
 Of space were filled with discontinuance
 Of thought, sense, motion. Worthless are they all,—
 Serving no end but pain—the heritance
 Of all things: pleasure doth but serve to pall:
 'Tis but a sweet to render bitterer Life's gall.

LXIII.

Tell us Annihilation shall imbibe
All being, and I will thy theme proclaim
Worthy rehearsal and regard : but gibe
No dreams of some fantastic afterdrame
Of blessedness for men and spirits : main
Their wits must be who doatingly desire
For boon what we ought rather to disclaim
And shun,—judging from past and Present : ire,
Not joy, I feel, when told I shall new bliss acquire.—

LXIV.

Would that on earth physician for the mind
Like to thyself I had discovered,—said
Vatel :—thy morbid discontent and blind
Distortion ev'n of joy,—benignly spread
With grief through Being,—into woe as dread
As evil's self—creates so deep distaste
By its untruth,—that thou in me hast bred
More reverence for the good in life amassed,
Than if thou wert Nature's devout encomiast.

LXV.

Spirits,—within me bath awoke new hope—
New faith ! Ev'n here we are not wholly lost :
It is because in sluggard thought we mope
And driel, that we deem this mystic coast
Our perdurable prison. Swift, unloosed
Essence shall be from bondage, when no more
We palter with ourselves, but with robust
Resolve probe our life-errors to the core—
Until, not Fate, but our own folly we abhor.

LXVI.

Soon shall we then discover why we made
 Shipwreck of mortal life, and why we here,
 By turns, sink in low sloth,—fiercely upbraid
 Being itself,—or agonize with Fear
 And Pain ; and soon deliverance will appear :—
 For Mind was formed all Evil to subdue
 By its own might——

Old earth-dreams !—with a sneer,
 Villeneuve exclaimed ; and let Earth still pursue
 Her dreams : but, do not here the sickening theme renew.

LXVII.

But who approacheth by the gloomy strand,
 With step of haste bounding o'er rock and level ?—
 Strange haste, in this supine, lethargic land :—
 'Tis he who did on earth so deeply revel
 In his dark theme of—' Suicide no Evil,'—
 And, when the page was finished, finished life,—
 Robert of Normandy, yclept the Devil !⁽¹⁰⁾—
 Thy visage with contending thoughts is rife—
 Wild spirit ! what brings thee here—what in thee germeth strife ?

LXVIII.

Already by the groupe, Le Diable
 Stood, with a look that seemed to reprehend
 Those sojourners in gloom—all, save Vatel,—
 Whose eyes of new-born hope a light I kenned,
 Of mystic sympathy and joy to send
 Forth as a greeting to the Norman's eyes.
 And thus the Norman spake :——

Spirits, attend
 The invitation from the Good and Wise,
 That now I bring : attend, and from your sloth arise !

LXIX.

Brothers, although their primal call ye slighted,
Sages and bards and princely spirits yearn
To kindle in your essences benighted
The fire of faith with which they inly burn.
And, thus, by one who erst, ye know, with scorn
Viewed being's gift, message they have renewed,—
That ye may cease, when his soul's hope ye learn,
And ken the faith with which he is imbued,
To think they mock ye with a feigned solicitude.

LXX.

It is no dream : Hades and Earth are waking
To consciousness of Mind's omnipotence.
Not less unwise than guilty in forsaking
Old Earth we were ; for we with affluence
Of might to subdue Evil's virulence
Were gifted : ev'n the weakest might have won
Some vict'ry helpful to the prevalence
Of Mind o'er Evil. But, it is begun—
The lofty strife—and conquest shall be gained, full soon !

LXXI.

I tell ye that on earth all natural ill
Begins to yield to science : fell disease
Is checked,—and men shall soon begin to fill
Th' expansive measure of their days. The seas
Already own the power of Mind : with ease
Men vault above the wave, fearing no rage
Of giant storms. On land, the very breeze
That vital is, they hold in vassalage,
And yoke, by viewless chains, unto the thought-winged sledge.

LXXII.

Mind glows and fulmines even in the clown ;
And men from yoke conventional and old
Shake themselves free : the crosier and the crown,
The sword and gun, all men begin to hold
For useless and pernicious things, and bold
The very peasants be to laugh aloud
At swollen names of gew-gaw shapes in gold.
Think ye that changes such as these forbode
No change for Hades, and her kings and pomp-thrones proud ?

LXXIII.

I tell ye Change hath come : judgment condign
Hath fallen on the essences of kings
Who raged to hear deep sage and bard divine
Tell, in prophetic strain, pomp-glistenings
Should pass away, and spirit-homagings
Be paid to Mind and Goodness. Where the bow
Of promise skieth mystic symbolings
Of monarch-splendour, forfeiture I saw
Of thrones, while congregated ghost-kings shook with awe.

Arise, arise, my brothers ! we were wrong
To quit Earth's life in craven discontent
At Evil : and ignoble to prolong
Our murmuring here it is : Evil was blent
With Good through Being with th' all-wise intent
T' ennoble human thought by healthful toil
That should have issue in magnificent
And universal triumph. Brothers, foil
The lethargy that doth your might-girt spirits spoil !

LXXV.

Come, listen the inspiring theme of Good
 And Right,—of Wisdom and Equality !
 Spirits,—the universe one brotherhood
 Of Knowledge, Truth, and Love, full soon shall be !
 I say, arise !—

Hence, with thy ribaldry !

Apicins fiercely answered : of such fare
 I covet not the taste. Hence, devotee
 Of dreams !—to mock our misery forbear !—
 Hence !—let us slumber on to deaden our despair !—

LXXVI.

Thus spake his swinish spirit,—nor arose
 His shade from its recumbency to greet
 The earnest messenger. In deeper doze
 Sophonius lay, as if he would maltreat
 The Norman with contempt. The rest with meet
 Attention heard,—and, with a countless host
 The descant drew around, in haste more fleet
 Than they had used for ages on that coast,—
 Expressed, as with one voice, their new-born hope and trust.—

LXXVII.

Then, to our brother exiles let us speed !—
 The Norman said ;—But what shall be *your* fate—
 Victims of sensual gust ? Is it decreed
 That Essences like yours in afterstate
 Of absolute brutality prostrate
 Shall lie for ever ? Oh ! that one bright ray
 From Nature's central fire would ye create
 Anew, with souls more human !—

And, away
 Faded my dream, as light renewed the prison-day.

NOTES TO BOOK THE SEVENTH.

(1) Stanza 38.—The portrait of Sophonius Tigellinus,—who was distinguished in Nero's court alike for dissoluteness and treachery, and who, at last, betrayed even the imperial libertine himself,—is well known to all readers of Juvenal; and Tacitus has left us a medallion picture (Hist. lib. 1. cap. 72.) truly characteristic of his portable and expressive mintage.

(2) Stanza 38.—The circumstances of Petronius Arbiter's singular suicide are described in the 19th chapter of the 16th book of Tacitus's Annals.

(3) Stanza 39.—'Millies sestertium' or £807,290, is stated to have been the worth of the estate of Apicius; and when he had hanged himself in the diseased belief that he had not enough left for a maintenance, 'centies sestertium,' or £80,000, was found to be the remnant of his fortune.—In the stanza, I have used the rhymers's license to employ round numbers.

If these notes were intended for comment in lieu of necessary explanation, I could not pass by the name of Apicius without observing, that the bearer of it fairly won his pre-eminence over all gormandizers ancient or modern, not merely by the vast sums spent on his appetite and by his self-martyrdom to the lunatic dread of want,—but by his composition of the treatise "*de Arte Coquinaria*,"—wherefrom, perhaps, even Eude himself might derive some hints for exciting dishes: though from Smollett's well-known satirical exposé of the delicacies of Roman cookery, modern epicures may imagine there can be nothing very enticing in the treatise on Cookery by Apicius Cœlius.

(4) and (5) Stanzas 39 and 40.—The general reader may find notices of the suicides of Mordaunt, cousin to the great earl of Peterborough, and of Lumley, earl of Scarborough, in various publications: the article 'Suicide' contained in a translation of Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary, that I read when a boy, first made me acquainted with their whimsical cases.

(6) Stanza 41.—Vatel—My only knowledge of his suicide is derived from Winslow's 'Anatomy of Suicide.'

(7) Stanza 41.—Villeneuve.—Seeing that one account of his death is as mysterious as another (see 'Biographie Universelle,' Vol. 49.), it may be, after all, that O'Meara's account of it, as given by Napoleon, is as true as any other.—"The conversation then turned upon French naval officers. Villeneuve—said he,—when taken prisoner and brought to England, was so much grieved at his defeat, that he studied anatomy that he might destroy himself. For this purpose he bought some anatomical plates of the heart, and compared them with his own body, in order to ascertain the exact situation of that organ. On his arrival in France, I ordered that he should remain at Rennes, and not proceed to Paris. Villeneuve, afraid of being tried by a court martial for disobedience of orders and consequently losing the fleet, for I had ordered him not to sail, or to engage the English, determined to destroy himself, and accordingly took his plates of the heart, and compared them with his breast. Exactly in the centre of the plate, he made a mark with a large pin, then fixed the pin as near as he could judge in the same spot in his own breast, shoved it in to the head, penetrated his heart, and expired. When the room was opened, he was found dead; the pin in his breast, and a mark in the plate corresponding with the wound in his breast. He need not have done it,—continued he,—as he was a brave man, though he possessed no talent."—Barry O'Meara's 'Voice from St. Helena', vol. i. page 57.

(8) Stanza 48.—My ghost of Petronius Arbiter does not argue half so earnestly in defence of Nero, as Mr. Walter Savage Landor.—See his 'Imaginary Conversations.'

(9) Stanza 49.—The practical joke of Diogenes upon Plato's definition of a Man, will be remembered by almost every reader.

(10) Stanza 67.—Robert le Diable is become a familiar personage by the success of Meyerbeer's famous opera; but whether he had ever any other existence than in the terrific soubriquet given by his subjects to Robert I., Duke of Normandy,—or whether a real personage existed, who either wrote a defence of Suicide, and then committed it,—or made a compact with the Evil One after the manner of Faust,—I suppose will remain a doubt.—I trust I may be allowed the use of his imaginary existence, in a merely imaginary vision: if I have employed as a spiritual agent, the 'mere shadow of a shade,' he cannot be very much out of character.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE EIGHTH.

I.

Unbidden visitors,—yet welcome,—tears
Gush forth, while streams that dulcet melody—
The tremulous, soft ‘*Sicilian Mariners*’—
Upon the evening air. How Love doth flee,—
Winged by the thrill of organ minstrelsy
So suddenly renewed within a gaol, (¹)
To visit the heart’s home ! Thoughts full of thee,
My bosom’s own,—so blest they banish bale
For joy,—breathe from the tones of that heart-madrigal.

II.

How wondrous is existence !—what strange ties
It hath : what individable soul-links
There be with formless sounds and harmonies
The Mind, dulled by Life’s grosser turmoil, thinks.
Extinct in power,—bereft of charm : how sinks
My spirit into Rapture’s lap, even now :
Such ecstacy, in Thralldom’s spite, Love drinks,
By help of those sweet notes, from gentle flow [woe !
Of Memory’s streams,—that Joy saith nought can bring back

III.

Hush ! 'tis my infancy's quaint ' Evening Hymn,'—
 My mother's favourite !—Tears ! ye best can tell
 What thoughts the heart's deep fountains overbrim
 With tenderness when that loved choral swell
 Its potency o'er memory sways. A knell
 It seems ;—and yet, a carol sweeter far
 Than mirth can troll. Lives in its strain a spell
 Which shews the grave that dear brave face doth mar,—
 But ever shields that heart from the oppressor's war.

IV.

Hark ! 'tis the grand ' Old Hundredth' that now peals
 Its solemn glory through the trancèd soul !
 That matchless marshalry of chords reveals,
 Luther ! thy freeborn majesty : they roll
 So boldly, gravely full,—that man's control,
 We feel, befits not the thew'd mind upgrown
 Which germs such thought-sounds. Term ye me a thrall ?
 How, then, upwakes the Saxon with each tone,
 Within me ? Nay !—I feel true freedom still my own !

V.

Vain are your fetters, tyrants, for the mind !
 Thy championship, brave stripling, proved them vain,—
 What time thou didst so fearlessly unbind
 Old Europe from the triple tyrant's chain,—
 Enthroning Reason the soul's suzerain :—
 Reason the judge o' th' book. True warrior
 For all men's right to think unawed by man,—
 What though mirk Superstition on the shore
 Of Mind still lingers ?—She shall raise her throne no more.

VI.

Thy enterprize is speeding, and hath sped :—
I care not that thou didst not comprehend
Its ultimate : it may be, wholesome dread
Of wild excess Nature doth sagely blend
With courage in great souls ; and, that the end
Of noblest change must gradually be sought,—
And Reason's heroes with Mind's foes contend
From step to step,—yea, victory for Thought
By years of struggling toil be stably, fully wrought.

VII.

I care not though some weaknesses were thine :—
Who shares thy giant strength ? None but the high
And mighty mental lineage who divine,
From age to age, the ground whereon to ply
At vantage their souls' sinews, and rely
On their own strength in truth for victory.
Thou art our own, great Saxon ! we descry
Our brave old Wickliffe's soul restored in thee ;
And claim thee for our honoured land of Lollardy !

VIII.

Honour, all honour to ye, glorious band
Who broke the bondage of the Priest of Rome !
Sires of our common Saxon fatherland,—
England and Germany,—a glorious home
Ye left us,—*if we will* !—amid the gloom
' Lighting a candle ' by your noble lives
And martyred deaths that quenchless, shall illume
Our land for aye ! Oh, that death-vaunt still gives
Us strength ; and with it, brave one, thy great deed revives !

IX.

What though those words, like oracles of old,
Were sealed, in their full meaning, to the seer
Who uttered them ?—The future shall behold
Their splendid verity : nay, perhaps, 'tis near !
Then—honour to each stalwart pioneer
Of mental freedom,—Wickliffe, Jerome, Huss,
Luther, Melancthon, Cobham, Latimer !
Honour to all who dared the flame, scorn, loss,—
Who spurned to live mere spirit-thralls inglorious !——

X.

O thrice-blest children of that age of light
And love, which now from the far future beams !
To you it will pertain to place aright
In Truth's great temple whom Herself esteems
Her true disciples. Ye, when the dim dreams
Of Time's weak youth are fled, and Knowledge pure
Hath given the topstone to Truth's fane,—like gems
In gold, shall place each dazzling portraiture
In its eternal niche :—our hands were premature !

XI.

But, when the toil of Mind hath wrought its aim ;—
When later Faiths, like older Phantasies,
Are reckoned with the Past ;—when Man's high name
Is grander than all titles ;—when all things of lies
And bloodshed,—thrones and altars,—creeds, and toys
Of Priests and Kings,—Knowledge hath swept away ;—
When Wisdom hath outgrown the childish guise
Of mythic story, and put on th' array
Of manhood ;—in that boon, free, happy, brother-day,—

XII.

It may be—that in Truth's eternal fane
 Enshrined ; each in his kindred niche of glory,
 He quaintly termed ' rebellious needleman,' (2)
 By thee, great age-fellow !—with martyr gory,
 Or some old stout confessor of faith hoary,
 May stand, as right co-workers, equal, true,
For ' Truth ;—although the world's old bigot-story
 Of Man's mind-infancy did long misview
 The scope of their twin-toil : scope that themselves scarce knew !

XIII.

It may be that, around that temple's space,
 Splendours may wreath full many a doubter's brow
 As brilliantly as they illumine the face
 Of philanthropic creed's-man. 'Mid the glow
 Of sculptured excellence, in shining row,
 Hobbes, Herbert, Mandeville, with Locke and Boyle,—
 Hume, Godwin, may, with Beattie, Butler, shew,—
 Statued with equal honour in Truth's aisle.—
 Lit with one ray,—how truly kindred was their toil !

XIV.

Spinoza and Rousseau, Bayle and Voltaire,
 With Fenelon, Erasmus, Pascal, shrined,—
 May beam in brotherhood eternal there !——
 But, for thy future children doth the mind
 Most fondly yearn, loved fatherland ! and find
 Its sweetest dreams flow thence: O that some dream
 Would visit me revealing humankind
 As the far future shall discover them,—
 Living as they shall live on this loved ocean-gem !—

XV.

What Howard, when the dungeon is forgot,—
 What Montague, when no man's blood is shed,—
 What Hale, when justice can be no more bought,—
 What Bernard Gilpin, when no Poor lack bread,—
 What Cartwright, when no tyrants on them tread,—
 What Clarkson, when the world hath not a slave,—
 What Owen, when free thought awakes no dread,—
 What Mathew, when there is no sot to save,— [grave!
 What Men shall grace our isles when Wrong hath found its

XVI.

O thrice blest children of that age of light
 And love which now the trustful spirit sees,—
 Though beaming from afar,—Ye will not slight
 Your noblest fathers, nor their memories!
 But, tombing names of blood and pride that please
 The human patient, whom to drug and craze
 Guile, long, with Power, hath striven,—Ye to sweet ease
 Of health, in heart and mind, restored, shall raise,
 With filial hands, true trophies to your fathers' praise!

XVII.

Bourse of the world wilt thou be, London, then?
 For still I turn with fondness to thy face,
 And doat upon thee,—though I, mournful, ken
 Too many a blemish there!—Wilt thou a grace
 Be, then, among Earth's cities?—Or, shall race
 Arrive from some far clime, new emigrants
 To found a home, and find thy desert-space
 Renewed, my country!—howling forest-haunts
 And wilds “peopled with wolves thy old inhabitants”? (3)

XVIII.

Shall Gain forsake thy marts, great queen of Thames ?
 Thy merchant-navies vanish ?—and, where Pride,
 In famine-woven silks and blood-bought gems,
 Now rolls her chariot, shall a dreary void
 Be found, and Silence with Decay divide
 Rule o'er thy streets ?—yea, there the badger peep
 Forth from sere weeds that half his gray head hide,
 Save when uplifted by the winds that sweep
 'Mong chambers where thy pampered lords no longer sleep ?

XIX.

Or, shall true grandeur deck thee,—bounding joy
 Of human hearts feeling their fathers' home,—
 That happy home,—renewed,—and thee the Eye
 Become of the wide world ?—Gaol, ' Bastile'-doom,
 Treadmill, whip, gallows, demon War's costume,
 And all his trophies and his engines gone :—
 No Vileness robed,—no Worth in rags ;—Health's bloom
 On cheek of sturdy sire and manly son,—
 Proving what secrets Science hath from Nature won !—

XX.

Mind writ in every face ;—books million-fold
 Multiplied ;—galleries with breath-shapes hung
 Raffaele might worship, or Apelles old ;—
 Groupes from great Shakspeare's world, or Chaucer's song,
 In bronzed or marbled life, seeming up-sprung
 From some new Phidian realm of earth beneath
 To gem the populous squares ;—Music's full tongue
 Telling to millions what Mozart in death
 Enraptured heard,—but could not the boon-sounds bequeath ;⁽¹⁾

XXI.

And all—for ALL !—rank, class, distinction-badge,
 For ever gone !—Labour by Science made
 Brief recreation,—not by Privilege
 Avoided, nor its thrift in name of Trade
 Or commerce filched :—to give a brother's aid
 To brethren, and enlarge the general bliss
 From knowledge, virtue, health,—beyond parade
 Of pomp or gold affording joy. I wis,
 When Truth doth reign,—Earth *shall be* such a Paradise !—

XXII.

Do I reharp like themes ? Perchance, the gaol
 Doth stagnate thought. And now the blythe old man
 Is gone, who joked, and told his merry tale
 Each morning when the prison-day began,—
 Who spread instruction through the hours' long span,
 Mingling the grave and gay with cheery tongue.
 O how I miss the septuagenarian ! (°)
 I wonder what hath kept his heart so young,—
 That still he dreams to live and see the end of Wrong !

XXIII.

Gone, are my younger fellow-rebels all,
 To bustle, once more, with Life's elbowing crowd ;
 And I am left, a solitary thrall,
 Where stillness like the silence of the shroud
 Pervades both night and day,—save when aloud
 Clash bolts and bars, and the shrill curfew tells
 The prisoner must to bed.—
 The vision glowed
 Again, in sleep ;—and, where the spirit dwells
 I seemed to dwell,—the spirit that its own Life quells.

XXIV.

A sense of loneliness, methought, I felt,—
When, from beneath the dome, again, I passed,
And wandered over mountains where none dwelt,—
But doleful voices from the howling blast
Cowed the lone spirit,—while gloom-clouds o'ercast
The dull gray sky. Anon, the way descended
Into a darksome clough, where antre vast,
With jagged mouth, the dern, dark pathway ended,—
And with its lowering brow some gloomier change portended.

XXV.

I entered, but trod timidly the rock
That echoed hollowly my steps of fear ;
And oft I halted, hearing voices mock
And chide my rashness for o'erventuring there ;—
Till, when I turned, thinking the cavern drear
And its unproven perils I would flee,—
It seemed as if dank vapours rose to blear
My vision,—and, forthwith, they fell on me
With noisome blight, till I was blinded utterly.

XXVI.

Chilled unto marble horror with the sense
That I was blind,—I would have shrieked, but, lo !
The will had lost its wonted prevalence
O'er faculty or organ,—and with throe
Unutterable I sank, feeling my woe
Too grievous to be borne. But, as I fell,
I ceased to grieve, feeling new might endow
My spirit—might to picture or to tell
I ken not—'twas so wildly indescribable.

XXVII.

Onward I floated—for no joint or limb
I seemed to need—into a region dark
Beyond all thought: Earth's midnight is but dim
Compared with the primeval blackness stark
And stript ev'n of minutest atom'd spark
Of light my new intelligence perceived
In this strange clime. I, its stern shapes to mark
Seemed thence empower'd that I was now bereaved
Of grosser sight, and essence had new eyes received:

XXVIII.

Eyes most intensely spiritual that cleft
The dread opaque gleefully as young eyes
On earth view brightest stars in the blue west
Above,—or lustrous gem-shells scrutinize
In fountains pellucid, then grasp the prize,
At jeopardy of life. Yet, I beheld
Emblems of mortal gloom and miseries,
Much more than joy: but in them was revealed
Grace so transcendent that the mind with rapture swelled

XXIX.

To feel its essence gifted with the power
Of viewing in thick darkness shapes of grace
And beauty so unspeakable. Meteor,
On marish seen, or victims' burial-place,—
Phantasmagoric slights, where figures chase
Each other in illusive vision wild,—
Spectrous deceits the human eye doth trace,
By brain-sick fancy or shrewd art beguiled,—
All fail to explicate how mystic mind was filled

XXX.

With sculptured forms in darkness, and rich hues
Of pictures crowded on her rapid glance.—
First, rose shapes that did statue-groupes compose
Of disappointed Love :—Orpheus' joy-trance
At his Eurydice's deliverance—
Quick changed to woe and horror, as he turned
Alas, too soon ! ill brooking tarriance
Of look—lips—clasped embrace : the bliss-cup earned
In vain—to atoms dashed—by Love's own madness spurned !

XXXI.

Then, Galatea, with her shepherd love,
Was statued, breathing joy—quick chased by pain—
For o'er them bent the Cyclop,—ire enwove
In his grim glance,—and wildly o'er her swain
The sea-nymph writhed when she beheld him slain.
Soon, seemed Leander, struggling with the wave
In death, and Hero leaping, in disdain
Of life, with haste into her watery grave.—
Then, images of grief and fate the darkness clave :—

XXXII.

The Carian queen,—in that fair monument
She built for her loved spouse, and which the world
Proclaimed a wonder,—o'er the dead was bent ;
And he who sung how the great Titan hurled
Defiance back at Jove,—stricken brain-whirled,
Fell, as the tortoise from the eagle's beak
Dropped on his head,—the oracle upfurl'd
In mystery accomplishing.(6) The Greek
Sublime,—pitying his slanderers,—and with courage meek

XXXIII.

Drinking the hemlock, while in aching grief
His friends stood round, then passed ; and, next, rose two
Sad images depicting man's brief
Mirth-hour on earth : Pollio's fair child, that drew
Its earliest breath in laughter, but scarce knew
Life ere in death it faded ; and the stern
And melancholy Agelastus, who
Ne'er laughed but once, and then, in Cynic scorn,
To see the thistles by the ass for lettuce torn.⁽⁷⁾

XXXIV.

Then rose twin corpses of the craftsmen sage
The Pythian's oracle that deftly reared,—
With Juno's priestess' duteous lineage
Who drew their mother to the fane : reward
Of death, as the best gift, on each conferred
By the high deities, for wondrous skill
And filial piety.⁽⁸⁾ Countless appeared
The sculptured shapes, thereafter, that did still
Pourtray grief, fate, life's swiftness, and all human ill.

XXXV.

Praxiteles, his mirror seemed to dash
To living fragments which a thousand-fold
Shewed his deformed rude visage to the rash
Enraged destroyer : Hoar, in gloomy hold
Trophonius sat : young Phaethon the bold
Fell from the chariot-sun : vortex and rock
By vexed Messina's shore, worn voyagers old
Seemed toiling to escape,—yet swiftly broke
The billows o'er them, and they bowed beneath Death's stroke.

XXXVI.

And while these semblances I, wondering, saw,
 With thousands more,—mysterious music streamed
 Upon my soul—refreshingly as blow
 The evening gusts on toiling swains condemned
 To reap all day, whilome the sun hath beamed
 His fiercest fires : blythely their hook they ply
 To win substantial good,—yet, when redeemed
 From overheats, breathe joyously :—so I,
 With sense of ease, listed the soothing minstrelsy.

XXXVII.

And soothing 'twas, though sad : a wildering strain
 Unearthly,—or, if like to aught on earth,
 Most like that theme which breathes her spirit's pain—
 The ' Mater dolorosa' (?)—with such birth
 Of sweetness, that, once heard, we deem, thenceforth,
 Grief-music thrills more deep deliciousness,—
 Aye, more essential joy,—than strains of mirth !—
 Most like that voice of rapturous distress
 It was,—and, wordless, seemed these woe-thoughts to express :—

XXXVIII.

' Oh ! what shall quell Life's universal sorrow ?
 ' In Hades' realm of darkness, drear and deep
 ' As Death's, or where gloom-prison Earth doth borrow
 ' Light from the gaudy sun,—all creatures weep
 ' All spirits ache ! Duration on doth sweep,
 ' Bringing no other change than newer woe !
 ' Oh ! that this waking to eternal sleep
 ' Might change, and spirits cease to think and know ;—
 ' For ever quenched Life's inward like its outer glow !

XXXIX.

‘ Oh! what is youthful Love ?—a torturous dream :
 ‘ What conjugal affection ?—pain and tears :
 ‘ What Life ?—capricious gift of Powers supreme
 ‘ That mock Man’s hopes, and laugh at his weak fears :
 ‘ Hath Virtue a reward ?—the wicked’s sneers :
 ‘ Hath Bliss existence ?—in the realm of Nought :
 ‘ Can Fate be shunned ?—when being disappears ;—
 ‘ But all in Hades or on Earth who thought
 ‘ And life inherit in her web of woe are wrought.

XL.

‘ Spirits, look onward !—what do ye perceive ?
 ‘ Woe-thought to come—a future filled with gloom—
 ‘ Ages in which your essence still shall grieve
 ‘ That it exists, and long for instant doom
 ‘ Of blank annihilation. Your old home
 ‘ Look back upon !—What is Man’s journey thorough
 ‘ Earth’s life ? Grief from the cradle to the tomb—
 ‘ Toil-thought for bread to-day—a shroud to-morrow :—
 ‘ Oh, what shall quell, for aye, Life’s universal sorrow ?’—

XLI.

Th’ enraptured anguish of my spirit ceased,—
 For now this minstrelsy I heard no more ;
 And every sculptured emblem, which a feast
 Of visioned wonderment had set before
 The soul’s interior self, vanished. Roar
 Of multitudinous voices came, and crowd
 On crowd of Sorrow’s suicides the shore
 Of Darkness, in desponding phalanx, trode,—
 Wailing that they could not escape their being’s load.

XLII.

By thousands, the stern, giant Cimbri trooped,—
And Xanthians and Saguntines,—they who fled,
In olden times, from life, by act abrupt,
Rather than wear the conqueror's yoke. That dread
And sullen band of Jews who undismayed,
In old cathedralled York, by their own hand
Met death, to shun the fiendish vengeance spread
For their rack'd tribe,⁽¹⁰⁾ stalked by on Darkness' strand.—
"Twere long to tell the Sorrow-crowds my spirit scanned:—

XLIII.

Of every age, and every mortal clime
They were; and 'twas appalling their array
To view, and think of nations choosing crime
Of suicide,—hasting themselves to slay,—
Rather than be their butcherous brethren's prey!—
The multitudes had passed,—and a slow river
Methought I reached, upon whose banks a gray
And solemn man whose every nerve did quiver
With woe, walked, murmuring at existence and the Giver.

XLIV.

And him there met the noble Roman,—made
An ever-during heritor of fame
By matchless Tully's friendship,—though such aid
His own high sense and virtues might disclaim—
Were it not native to the sovereign flame
Of genius, like the sun, to render gleam
Of lesser lustres dull, and give a name,
Even to brightest things, less for their beam
Inherent, than the ray lent by his fire supreme.—

XLV.

Pomponius, hail!—began the solemn sire;—
Much have I longed to meet thee in this scene
Of mystic darkness,—for, until I tire
To loathing, have I walked with ghosts obscene,
Listening their threadbare tales of vulgar teen:—
Friend of Rome's noblest tongue and largest mind,—
Thee, calm Philosophy with thought serene
To bear unmoved the common woes assigned
To man, must have endowed: what subtle woe was joined

XLVI.

Unto thy soul on earth, that thou its coil
Shook off? Could loftiest friendship, wealth, and ease,
With joys refined, thee fail to reconcile
To life? O Atticus, while I had these,—
While on my peace no feminine fiend did seize,
Dishonouring my children, and my own
Hoar age covering with shame,⁽¹¹⁾—a gift to please
I found Earth's life,—not that insipid boon
Which some proclaim it, ere the mortal scene they shun.

XLVII.

But thou hadst no soul-harrowing shame to meet
In every neighbour's eye: men did not point
At thee the finger,—and, anon, repeat
The damning whisper, or the subtle hint,
Wherever thou wert seen. What mystic dint
Invisible of Sorrow's sting could pierce
Thy heart,—and make the world seem so disjoint
That thou must flee it, hither to immerse
Thy soul in gloom?—Roman, to me thy theme rehearse!

XLVIII.

Pontalba !—for thy sorrow-notes reveal
Too truly, reverend mourner, who thou art—
The thoughtful Roman answered ;—to unseal
My secret I will haste. Within the heart
I ever wore this canker : that depart
I must, or late, or soon,—must yield my breath,
Unknowing of what joy or aftersmart
The soul inherits in the realm of Death,—
Or whether he the spirit's flame extinguisheth.

XLIX.

Strong pain corporeal hurried me to take
My fatal step more early than, perchance,
I, otherwise, had sped from Life's heart-ache :
Yet, ease returned, long ere the severance
Was made 'tween clay and spirit : but, th' advance
Begun tow'rds Death,—retreat more terrible
Appeared than the dread march :⁽¹²⁾—itinerance
Of the dark path, a second time !—the spell
Half-broken to repair !—farewell, and yet farewell !—

L.

I could not face such horror,—for I knew
That I should hourly see my funeral urn,
And that more bitterly it would imbue
Life's joys with sorrow, if I should return
When I had well-nigh reached the portal stern.
Oh, tell me, mourning sire,—if Death with thee
Was not the great Smile-queller : the thought borne
For ever uppermost, that strangled Glee
Ev'n in its birth,—or made its breath an agony !

LI.

I know not that it was,—the sire replied :
It is my nation's habit to avert
Despondency of thought in the gay tide
Of revelry ; and when to share the sport
Men cease, by age enfeebled, they resort
Still to the scene of mirth, to dissipate
Dull thoughts by seeing sprightly youth exert
Its agile limbs or jocund wit : sires sate
Their minds beholding sons their spirits recreate.

LII.

Thy answer seemeth strange,—the Roman said :
To me, beholding what I could not share
For ever multiplied the heart's dim dread
Of the approaching tomb : joys of the fair
And young ceased to be gladsome,—for the glare
O' th' funeral torch gleamed on my mental sight :
Death—Death—was present with me everywhere—
Smirching the face of Nature with his blight—
Bereaving the worn heart of solace or delight.—

LIII.

But why didst thou not mingle in the strife
Of public act or counsel ?—asked the soul
Of the gray Gallic sire ;—for thee Earth's life
Had countless remedies for this strange dole.
Oh ! had thy lot beneath the restless rule
Of him who swayed my fatherland been cast,
The fever of the times had warmed thy cool
O'er-meditative brain, until Death's vast
Reality had quelled this Shade whose slave thou wast.

LIV.

'Thou speakest, Spirit, as if strifeful Rome
Were some Arcadian grove,—replied the ghost
Of Atticus :—albeit, within her womb
Myriads with greed of fame or gold engrossed,
Resembled some insatiate wolvisk host—
Ever in open cry for prey. In fear
Of its heart-tortures, public care I thrust
Far from me ; nor discern I, in this drear
Gloom-region, that its slaves than I aught happier were.

LV.

Pontalba ! for man's soul no fix'd good
There is : no state enfranchiseth the mind
From tyranny of Evil's monster brood.
If in society men strive to find
Relief from megrim dullness,—'mong their kind
They soon engender hate, even without
Design,—and wish they never had repined
At solitude,—although with dread or doubt
They wrestled till compelled to shun their own lone thought.

LVI.

And what say'st thou of thine own fitful race ?
Life's pulse beats not less healthily' in the veins
Of the most feverous tenants of Earth's space
Than it doth beat in theirs. Pleasures to pains,
By very eagerness, they turn : each drains
The joy-cup of the hour as if the world
Had not another for his draught. Contains
Not this woe-cline,—whom Pleasure's zest brain-whirled,—
Legions, from thy own land by mad self-murder hurled ?

LVII.

There is no human state exempt from woe.
 If the lone thinker with a dread profound
 Of death be haunted,—they who love the shew
 And strife of crowds carry within some wound
 From rival or proud tyrant who hath frowned
 Upon their peace : and if dull solitude
 Be irksome,—Pleasure's gay and guilty round
 As surely leads to madness. 'Tis a crude
 Abortion of a world ; and Mind must be at feud

LVIII.

For ever with the Powers to whom it owes
 Existence—if volition they possess ;—
 And if Necessity all being bows
 Beneath its sceptre, at our wretchedness
 We cannot but repine.—

Whence this excess
 Of perverse discontent ?—a voice began :—
 And lo ! a crowded audience bodiless
 I saw,—while through the host this murmur ran—
 ‘ Meek Menedemus hear—the sage Eretrian ! ’ (¹³)

LIX.

Whence this excess of perverse discontent ?—
 The sage reverbed :—dost thou so soon forget,
 Illustrious Roman ! thy so late assent
 To consolable thoughts, when thee I met
 Nursing, as now, this vain, unwise regret ?
 Alas, we all are too much prone to cling
 To sorrow in this clime, and think our debt
 To justice never will be paid. Yet spring
 High hopes within me—thoughts of rescue heralding !

LX.

O Attieus, I grieve that we the call
Fraternal of imperial spirits slighted,—
Nor joined their descant in the mystic hall :
Yet, in their souls on whom Hope hath alighted,
For Sorrows' host in dreary realm benighted
Compassion may be felt, till they renew
Their invitation. Not for ever blighted,
Brothers, is this our essence : hopes congrue
With deep discursive reason thus my mind to thew :—

LXI.

It is not by unalterable law
That evil's tyranny o'er Man prevaieth :
Brothers, in us, in all, a might to awe
The moral curse o'th' universe indwelleth.
O when the sheen of Brotherhood unveileth
Its glory, how our happy race will ponder
And muse upon the Past, until it faileth
Their souls to tell—for ecstasy of wonder—
What first could rend Man's heart from brother-man asunder !

LXII.

When selfishness, by Love and Truth dispelled
From human spirits, ceaseth to mislead
With falsest sense of interest,—and 'tis held
A fiction foul that Nature hath decreed
Man only can be moved to generous deed
Of enterprize by personal reward ;—
When Brotherhood returns,—and hearts do feed
On richest bliss, toiling in disregard
Of self, and seeing their toil's fruit by brethren shared ;—

LXIII.

When Strength and Health their happiness derive
From knowledge that the produce of their toil
Is shared by Feebleness and Age;—when live
The men of Mind to kindle a heart-smile
Where'er they move,—disdaining to defile
Their names with titles, or their hands with gold,
And yearning every moment to beguile
Mankind to deeds of love and goodness bold,—
Until the sun a world of mercy doth behold ;—

LXIV.

Think ye that then the curse of Evil's reign
Mankind shall know ?—Suffering will disappear,—
For love and sympathy shall vanquish pain,—
And gentlest pity shall the lorn heart cheer
'Till sorrow's stream for joy's abounding tear
Is changed. 'Twill be a holy, gladsome scene—
Too holy for mad Pleasure to be there !—
A world of Love and Truth and Peace serene—
A world of brother-hearts—whose joys are evergreen !

LXV.

A world in which thy Death-fear, noble one !
Can no more haunt the soul. Who will fear Death
When, with fraternal love Man's course begun,
Hath been continued ? When to yield his breath
The hour is come, with this exalted faith
In gladness Man can die—"A world I leave
'Of happy brothers !—my brief being hath
'Increased its bliss ;—and after-hearts shall cleave
'To me through time, and with their songs my memory weave !

LXVI.

‘ And if our thought surviveth mortal clay
‘ My loving spirit for a world of love
‘ Is fitted : if I think no more,—decay
‘ Itself is welcome ; since around, above,
‘ Bliss, still progressing, is with being wove,—
‘ And men, succeeding men, shall still proclaim
‘ The bliss is but begun ! ”—Thus men shall prove
Superior to death-dread, on earth : the flame
Of Brother-love ’bove selfish fears exalting them !—

LXVII.

With visages of hope the mystic crowd
Stood, in expressive silence, as the soul
Of Menedemus ceased. Then, one who glowed
With nobler thought than when the venom’d bowl,
To ’scape from hated Rome’s renewed control,
He, fearing vengeance, in fair Capua took,—
Rash Vibius Virius, (14) thus began to’ extol
The ’Eretrian’s theme :—

Forbear rebuke,
Meek sage !—but, henceforth, we this gloom shall hardly brook :

LXVIII.

For who can list thee tell of blooming bliss,
And brother-love for ever verdurous,—
Nor long to quit a dreary clime like this ?
’Tween Earth and Hades link mysterious
We spiritually discern ; and bliss for us
Remains—if it be Earth’s sure heritage :—
Yet, till kings cease their contests murderous,
And nations wear no more the conqueror’s badge,
Dost thou not dream—this reign of Mercy to presage ?

LXIX.

And, until monarch-spirits, in our clime,
 Disown their lofty claims, what can make known,
 By mystic sign, in penal land of crime,
 That Hades' crowds shall soon behold begun
 The reign of Brotherhood ?—O that the boon
 Were near !—

Behold who cometh ! cried the host ;
 The spirit of thy friend, illustrious one !—
 The friend o' th' bards most noble and robust
 Of thy great land,—Varus,⁽¹⁵⁾—the thoughtful herald-ghost !—

LXX.

Hail, Atticus !—the herald cried,—and ye
 Grief-brothers, who still nurse, in gloomiest land,
 Your sorrow ;—once again, high destiny
 Of human spirits to search out, the band
 Of heroes, sages, bards, and kings, divanned
 In emblematic grandeur, ye conjure
 To lend your aid ! Brothers, full soon the brand
 Of slavery shall, on earth, be known no more !—
 Brothers, full soon bliss shall prevade this climature !

LXXI.

Take hope—take heart ! Monarchs, themselves, display
 Zeal for equality and brotherhood !—
 O haste to leave your gloom, and, swift, away
 Pursue with me your spirit-course, the Good
 And Great to join in converse !—

Like a flood
 Of rapture burst the choral song—‘ We come !’
 From myriads hope-inspired ;—and ere I viewed
 From darkness their departure,—out of gloom
 I passed,—woke by that thrilling song's exordium.

(1) Stanza 1.—The opening of an organ, in the gaol-chapel (which adjoined the ‘day-room’ apportioned to me and my fellow-offenders), gave occasion to this and some of the following stanzas. In the scanty catalogue of prison-events, it was one, to me, too exciting to be passed by either unfelt or uncommemorated.

(2) Stanza 12.—“Rebellious needleman.” I find I am slightly mistaken in the phrase, which I quoted from memory, without means of correction. Here is the emphatic passage from Mr. Carlyle’s magnificent unrhymed, unmetred Epic:—“Nor is our England without her missionaries. She has her Paine: rebellious staymaker; unkempt; who feels that he, a single Needleman, did by his ‘*Common Sense*’ Pamphlet, free America;—that he can and will free all this world; perhaps even the other.”—‘*The French Revolution: a History* :’ vol. 2, chap. iii.

(3) Stanza 17.—“Peopled with wolves thy old inhabitants.” 2 Pt. of Hen. 4.—The quotation was tempting—for a rhyme; but I almost feel as if I had committed a mortal sin in thus literalizing in its application Shakspeare’s sublime and sinewy figure.

(4) Stanza 20.—Mozart’s last words—“*Now* I begin to see what might be done in music!”

(5) Stanza 22.—My venerable fellow-‘conspirator’ and fellow-prisoner (for the first year) John Richards, whose seventy-first birth-day occurred on the first Christmas-day we passed in the gaol.

(6) Stanza 32.—“*Ingenium est ei, testudines raptas frangere e sublimi jaciendo: quæ sors interemit poetam Æschylum, prædictam fati (ut ferunt) ejus diei ruinam secunda cœli fide caventem.*”—Plinii Nat. Hist. lib. 10, c. 3.—“*Æschyli vero poetæ excessus . . . super quem aquila testudinem ferens, elusa splendore capitis (erat enim capillis vacuum), perinde atque lapidi eam illisit, ut fractæ carne vesceretur.*”—Valer. Maximi, lib. 9. c. 12, De Mortibus non vulgaribus externorum.

(7) Stanza 33.—Cicero, Pliny, and others commemorate the grandfather of Crassus, surnamed *Ἀγέλαστος*, who never laughed but once,—namely,—when he saw an ass eat thistles. and then his exclamation was, ‘*Similes habent labra lactucas.*’—*Like lips like lettuces.*

(8) Stanza 34.—The stories of Agamedes and Trophonius, architects of the vestibule to the temple of Delphos,—and of Biton and Cleobis, the sons of Cydippe, priestess of Juno at Argos, are familiar to every one who has the slightest acquaintance with old Greek fables. Plutarch tells the stories in his *Morals*.

(9) Stanza 37.—Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* (I never heard Rossini's) is the 'theme' to which I allude. I never heard it performed but once; yet its pathetic power left an indelible impression on my memory.

(10) Stanza 42.—The suicidal massacre of the Jews of York, to escape from the horrid persecution of the *christian* citizens, on the 11th of March, 1189,—is related at considerable length (from Roger Hoveden, Matthew Paris, and William Newburgh), by Drake, in his *Hist. and Antiq. of York*: Book I, chap. iv.

(11) Stanza 46.—

While on my peace no feminine fiend did seize,

Dishonouring my children, and my own

Hoar age covering with shame, &c.—

The brief account of M. de Pontalba, and his suicide, in Winslow's 'Anatomy of Suicide,' is so absorbingly, horrifically interesting that I transcribe it:—

"M. de Pontalba was one of the great proprietors of France. His son had been a page of Napoleon's and afterwards a distinguished officer, aide-de-camp to Marshal Ney, and a protégé of the Duke of Elchingen. He married the daughter of Madame d'Almonaster, and for some time they lived happily; but on the death of her mother, Madame de Pontalba began to indulge in such extravagances that even the enormous fortune of the Pontalbas was unequal to it. This led to some remonstrance on the part of her husband, on the morning after which she disappeared from the hotel, and neither he nor his children had any clue to her retreat. At last, after an interval of some months, a letter arrived from her to her husband, dated New Orleans, in which she announced that she meant to apply for a divorce; but for eighteen months nothing more was heard of her, except by her *drafts* for money. At last she returned, but only to afflict her family. Her son was at the Military Academy of St. Cyr. She induced him to elope, and the boy was plunged in every species of debauchery and expence. This afflicted, in the deepest manner, his grandfather, who revoked a bequest he had made him of about £4,000 a-year, and seemed to apprehend from him nothing but future ruin and disgrace. The old man, eighty two years of age, resided in his chateau of Mont Levéque, whither, in October, 1834, Madame de Pontalba went to attempt a reconciliation with the wealthy senior. The day after her arrival she found she could make no impression on her father-in-law, and was about to return to Paris, when old M. de Pontalba, observing a moment when she was alone in her

apartment, entered it with a brace of double-barrelled pistols, locked the door, and, approaching his astonished daughter-in-law, desired her to recommend herself to God, for that she had but few minutes to live; but he did not even allow her one minute—he fired immediately, and two balls entered her left breast. She started up and fled to a closet, her blood streaming about, and exclaiming that she would submit to any terms, if he would spare her.—“*No, no! You must die!*” he exclaimed, and fired his second pistol. She had instinctively covered her heart with her hand; the hand was miserably fractured by the balls, but it saved her heart. She then escaped to another closet, where a third shot was fired at her without effect; and at last she rushed in despair to the door, and while M. de Pontalba was discharging his last barrel at her, she succeeded in opening it. The family, alarmed by the firing, arrived, and she was saved. The old man, on seeing that she was beyond his reach, returned to his apartment, and blew out his brains. It seemed clear that he had resolved to make a sacrifice of the short remnant of his own life, in order to release his son and his grandson from their unfortunate connexion with Madame de Pontalba. But he failed—none of *her* wounds were mortal; and within a month after, Madame de Pontalba, perfectly recovered, in high health and spirits, radiant, and crowned with flowers, was to be seen at all the fêtes and concerts of the capital.” Pp. 292-294.

(12) Stanza 49.—It is a well-known relation that when Atticus had subdued a fever by fasting, or medicine, in his 77th year, he refused to take food, from an unwillingness to prolong life.

(13) Stanza 58.—Menedemus, is another of the suicides of antiquity who are described as escaping from life by refusing food. False accusation of treason is stated to have been the desperate provocative with this Socratic philosopher of Eretria.

(14) Stanza 67.—Livy (lib. 26. cap. 13, 14), tells how Vibius Virius advised the Capuans to revolt to Hannibal, and, when the city was retaken by the Romans, took poison to escape the vengeance of the victors.

(15) Stanza 69.—Quintilius Varus: I have, for the sake of introducing another character, *asserted* what is merely *probable*,—from Horace de Arte Poetica (438) the 18th Ode of Book I, and also the 24th. It is more generally believed that Q. Varus the poet, and Q. Varus the commander of the Roman armies in Gaul, who slew himself because overcome by the craft of Ariminus, were different persons.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE NINTH.

I.

'Tis Woman's voice !—woman in wailful grief,
Joined by her babe's scarce conscious sympathy.—
'Thy wife hath come to take her farewell brief,
Gaunt felon !—brief and bitter must it be
For thy babe's mother,—since the wide salt sea
Must roll, for life, its deep, dark gulph between
Thee, convict,—and that form of agony !
Poor wretched thing ! well may she wail, I ween,
And wring her hands; and wish that she had never been !

II.

' Let me have one last kiss of my poor babe !'
He saith, and clingeth to the grate. Oh ! how
The turnkey's answer will his bosom stab !—
' Away !—we open not the bars !'—and, lo !
They push him rudely back !—he may not know
What baleful bliss it gives to clasp a child
Or wife, ere one must yield them to life's woe.—
Ah ! little had that kiss his grief beguiled,—
But, rather, filled his soul with after-throes more wild.

III.

She fainteth !—yet awakes to moan and weep !—
How little didst thou think that smiling morn
Thou didst, so early and so eager, peep
Into thy mirror, and thy breast adorn
With virgin rose,—so soon the sorrow-thorn
Would there have pierced !—that thou, in two short years,
Wouldst see thy husband in that dress of scorn,—
And turn,—a widowed bride,—a thing of tears,—
From that stern grate, forlorn, to meet the world's rude jeers !

IV.

Poor sufferer ! how wilt thou the future brook !—
To drudge from morn to eve for beggar's bread ;—
To hear thy ragged child receive rebuke
For his sire's sins,—that on the exile's head
Already fall full sore ;—to see him shed
Tears when he asks for food, and thou hast none
To stop his hunger ;—then, to make thy bed
With him upon the heath or moorland lone,—
Unless, for infamy, thou tak'st the rich man's boon !

V.

What misery,—hadst thou never been a bride,—
Thy heart had shunned !—Yet, thou wilt fondly cling
Unto the memory of thy love,—nor chide,
Ev'n by a thought, in deepest suffering,
His error, who did thy young joy-bloom bring
To desolation ! Ill requited love
Was thine, ev'n from the bridal-revelling,—
Yet, thou forgavest all, nor didst reprove
The wild excess which oft thee nigh to madness drove.—

VI.

Oh Woman ! how thy truest worth is slighted ;—
Thy tenderness how often met with hate ;—
Thy fondest, purest hopes, how often blighted ;—
How Man, the tyrant, lords it o'er thy fate—
Yet feigns for thy benign behests to wait ;—
How jealously he guards thy faithfulness,
And forms a censure on thy every state—
Thy chastity terms coldness,—thy caress
Weak fooling,—stratagem,—or grosser love's excess !

VII.

Oh Woman ! fairest, frailest, sweetest flower
Of Nature's garden,—what rude storms thee bend !
Thy heart,—thou priceless, peerless, matchless dower
Of Nature's treasury,—what sufferings rend !
How meanly men, through selfishness, contend
To pamper thee !—how silkenly their lays
Of love they lisp to gain their guilty end ;—
How sensually Man lauds thy beauty's blaze ;—
How heartlessly deserts thee in its dimmer days !

VIII.

Oh Woman ! what anxieties destroy
The bliss thou dreamest none can take away
When hushing thy soft care—thy cradled joy !
How Time the blessings thy fond hopes pourtray
Oft turns to curses, and thy heart a prey
To keenest woe becomes : maternal woe,
That like maternal love, the human clay
Moves more intensely than severest throe
Or most ecstatic thrill that mortal bosoms know.

IX.

Mysterious bonds of Nature ! can ye be
Without a wise Deviser ? Hath a blind
Necessity, indeed, implanted ye ?
Are ye not proofs of All-pervasive Mind ?—
Hath Goodness, then, these spirit-throes designed,—
Still mingled with the mother's cup of bliss ?—
Wherefore, oh wherefore, still must mortals find
Mystery ne'er lessen, but, for aye, increase
Beneath their feeble search, or frail analysis ?

X.

Aye, Woman !—for thy mother-heart remain
The keenest agonies :—to see revealed
Passions that do defy thee to restrain
Their baneful germs, and which, thou know'st, must yield
A deadly fruit :—to see thy young flower fell'd
In its sweet promise ;—or to be bereft
Of it by ruthless power that tyrants wield
O'er Poverty,—and, though thy heart be cleft
With sorrowing, no sight of it to be vouchsafed !—

XI.

‘ Thou pampered tyrant who dost crush the Poor !
‘ Alien of Nature from thy mother's womb !
‘ Who never sucked the breast of her that bore
‘ Thy most unnatural self ! Thou humoursome
‘ Wealth-wanton, who dost send thy child from home,
‘ Or call'st a hireling, Life's sweet stream to give
‘ Unto thy babe !—What wonder that ye doom
‘ The Poor to pain ? —since in ye doth not live
‘ A natural heart, how can ye Nature's voice believe ?

XII.

‘Ye artificial things in blood and breath,
‘What human creatures feel how can ye tell?’—
Tush ! raving mother,—the rich wanton saith
Thy pangs are feigned, and whipping should dispel
Thy discontent ! Oh ! ye will wake the yell
Of reckless violence around ye yet,
Tyrants ! unless ye, timely, bid the knell
Be tolled of dæmon-legislation !—

Let

Me strive that theme of rendering heart-ache to forget !—

XIII.

Oh Woman ! what illustrious children thine
Oft prove ev’n when thy fate and theirs seems dark.
Slave-mother of old Smyrna, who didst pine
In grief, and in lorn hope thy babe embark
On Meles’ stream, cradled in that frail ark,—
How little didst thou dream thy infant’s glory
Would beam through Time,—and he,—the patriarch
Of song become,—all bards and sages hoary
Transcend in honour, through the world, to latest story !

XIV.

Or, if thy Homer, and the child on Nile,—
‘The ‘babe’ that ‘wept,’ but soon proud Pharaoh’s might
Defied, and led those thousands on their toil
Through the drear wilderness, the Canaanite
To dispossess,—if these, to read aright
Their story, Reason must as Myths regard,—
Fertile in moral, albeit overdight
With marvel,—Mothers in late times have reared
Their sons in want, yet seen them win Fame’s high reward.

XV.

How thy best children, Woman, testify
A mother's worth,—attributing their zest
For enterprize, or love of good, to thy
Exalting nurture ! O let him attest
A mother's worth—that Titan of the West—
Unequalled Washington ! And if such men,
That dwarf princes, vigour from thy meek breast
Now draw, Woman ! what will thy sons be when
Man looks on thee no longer with the tyrant's ken ?

XVI.

When chivalry's false homage is forgot,—
When eastern jealousy no more immures
And renders thee a vernal idiot,—
When thy young purity no villain-lures
Are spread to blemish,—when thy mind matures
In freedom, and thy soul can make its choice,
Untrammelled, unconstrained, where heart assures
The heart it is beloved,—shall not thy voice
And look restore to Earth its long-lost Paradise ?

XVII.

That Mind is of no sex,—when thou art freed,
Thy thought-deeds shall proclaim : our Edgeworth's sense,
Our Baillie's truthful skill, Felicia's meed
Of grace with perfectest mellifluence
Of music joined,—or thy magnificence
Of heart and reason, Necker's glorious child !—
Problems shall be no more : Woman's intense
Inherent claim to mind-rank, when befoiled
No more by Man, she will display with glow unsoiled.

XVIII.

And when her children see her move in joy,
And yet in truest dignity,—no more
A slave,—no more a drudge,—no more a toy !—
When from her lips of love her spirit's store
Of high ennobling wisdom she doth pour
Into her offspring's ears,—into their eyes,
Ere speech be learnt, looks Nature's purest lore
Of truth and virtue,—shall not Man arise
From error,—nurtured thus,—and loftiest good devise ?——

XIX.

These day-dreams past of Woman's destiny,—
To Man's auxiliar in beatitude,—
The brain in sleep, instinct with phantasy,
Pursued the credent theme. Methought I viewed
A pasture-plain, or mead, of amplitude
Unbounded, in that mystic spirit-land
Where mortals who have ventured to denude
The soul of clay without His high command—
The great Life-Giver—feel his stern corrective hand.

XX.

But, now, the end of punishment seemed near,
And spirits talked of blest participation
In life set free from pain and woe, and fear,—
While I beheld them in thronged groups advance,
On journey bent to hear the utterance
Of their high manumission. Prankt the plain
Appeared with flowers of wild luxuriance
Of growth and deep intensity of stain ;
But unto them no gloss nor perfume did pertain.

XXI.

Their dyes seemed of such depth as dyes of flowers
At summer's even, when the garish sun
Hath set, and either human eyes new powers
Receive, bedazed no longer,—the' air hath won
Strength to assist the optic nerve, or on
The flowers themselves sheds nitrous particles
That deepen colours: thus they glowed, not shone :
A rich array of blossoms, buds, and bells,
So fragrant to the eye, Fancy supplied their smells.

XXII.

And ever and anon some feminine form,—
For souls of men appeared not in my dream,—
Stooped to select some favourite from the swarm
Of floral beauties, and then wound the stem
Within her hair: others an anadem
Of sundry blossoms wove, and, garlanded,
Discoursing rapturously of their high theme,
Smiling, across the pleasant pasture sped :—
Blythe sight it was to see, in soul-land of the Dead.

XXIII.

Nor unfamiliar seemed their faces fair,
Their names and deeds, unto the dream-rapt soul :—
Though many a suicide of Eld was there—
Full many a virgin whom old bards extol
For spotless chastity, and of whose dole
They make sweet plaint: full many a wife
Of high heroic virtue that with cool
Resolve chose death by poison-cup or knife,
Or in the wave,—disdaining a dishonoured life.

XXIV.

And groups passed by who fled from widowhood
Through love excessive for their bosoms' lords ;
And throngs appeared that nobly shed their blood
In patriotic struggle, when the swords
Of tyrants slew their sons and sires, or hordes
Of foreign foes sought to pollute their homes ;
And forms were there whom History records
For questionable deeds, or whom Truth dooms
To infamy,—though Fraud writ praises on their tombs.

XXV.

From out a Roman group, methought, there passed
Into a daisied bye-path, matrons twain
Whose sable locks with hyacinths were graced ;
And their dark eyes a fervour did sustain
That found its reflex in that sapphire stain :
Intensely truthful was their spirits' glow,—
And, as mine joined them, on the green champaign,
I pondered deeply on their mortal throe,
And cause for which they did that death-pang undergo.

XXVI.

The twain were—Cato's daughter, Brutus' spouse—
Illustrious suicidal lineage !—
Whose death, so horridly courageous,
Old legends tell ; and she who to assuage
Fear in her husband—by the tyrant's rage
Death-doomed—plunged to her heart the steel, and cried
' It is not painful !'—smiling, while the pledge
So dread she gave of love. These, side by side,—
Porcia and Arria,⁽¹⁾—o'er the plain, conversing hied.

XXVII.

Say, sister spirit!—Cato's daughter spake,—
Seems it not, now, to thee, but yesterday
We did great Rome, our glorious home, forsake,
To rush on death? Now they are passed away,
'The ages of our pain, in mind's survey,
Seem nought,—and yet, how drear in passing!—Earth
Produceth self-same thought and feeling: they
Who sorrow reckon ages from the birth
Of woe,—but say 'twas short, when tears are changed for mirth.

XXVIII.

Arria replied: such are my thoughts of weal
And woe on earth, my sister, and of joy
That doth the sorrows of our essence heal
In this strange afterstate, and mind upbuoy
With cheering faith that, henceforth, no alloy
Shall mingle with our bliss. Yet, oft, our thought
Shall wander back, and memory employ
Her power to awake many an image fraught
With tenderness—earth-forms on which the soul will doat.

XXIX.

Oh! never can the hours of youthful love
Cease to be precious,—nor from memory fade,
Amid the highest rapture we may prove
Of that beatitude which shall pervade
Hades for ever!—

Nor shall aught upbraid
The heart,—Porcia rejoined,—for this its truth
'To what it chastely loved; but, rather, aid,
From sweet revisitings of joys of youth,
'The spirit shall derive for its eternal growth.

XXX.

Aye, to the purest thoughts of Life's young spring
Oft shall the ever-growing soul return,—
Drawn by the good each visit thence shall bring
To the advancing spirit—which shall yearn
For loftier good the further it is borne
From evil : thus our mind's boon sustenance
Deriving from the Past, and what we learn
Of noblest kindred's high participation
Of virtue, shall enlarge into a blest expanse.—

XXXI.

And dost thou think it shall be thus, indeed ?
Said Arria : shall our essence still expand
In bliss the more on virtue it doth feed,
On soft beneficence, and breathings bland
To bless—much more than to be blest ? How grand,
How glorious, then, is human nature !—frail
And puny though they termed it who had scanned,
Or thought they scanned, its strength. Oh, that Mind's veil
Some Power had rent while in its house terrestrial !

XXXII.

Not wholly secret, sister, was the true
Sublimity of Man,—said Porcia ;—some
There were in every age and clime,—though few,—
Who taught that goodness, and not awe and gloom,
Must nurture the soul's bud until its bloom
Should be unfolded into noblest bliss :
The distant East, fair Greece, and our own Rome
Possessed such sages,—though the Priest's devise
Thwarted them evermore :—that type of Artifice !

XXXIII.

Ev'n in Earth's infancy a sage arose
In Orient far, who taught how purely blest
The spirit grew that could forgive its foes,—
How happiness was won by scorn of rest
And ease,—and choice of toil to the distress,
In body or in mind, to bring relief:
And after-sages did these truths attest:—
Alas! too oft by violent death their brief
Love-toil was stayed,—for Falsehood still held Man's belief!

XXXIV.

But who is this the wider way that leaves
To cross our path, as if she sought to speak
Of some glad birth her joyous soul conceives?—
Hail, Carthaginian sister!—to the meek,
But fervid form,—Porcia said on,—thy cheek
Intensely glows, the gentle fire o'th' heart
Revealing: say, what blissfulness dost seek
To tell, that thrills thee, now our penal smart
Is past?—Haste, blythesome one, thy joy-thought to impart!

XXXV.

By sympathy, I knew that your discourse
Was of the power of Goodness, and I yearned
To hear ye its blest eulogy rehearse,—
The wife of Asdrubal answer returned:—
For she it was:—the same who nobly scorned
To join her craven lord in traitorous flight
To Scipio, and with her two children burned
Within the sacred pyre herself did light,
Mid the beleaguered city, in the Roman's sight. (²)—

XXXVI.

Oh ! well mayst thou the theme of gentleness
Desire to list,—said Arria,—for thy clime
Bruised by our sires' ambition 'neath excess
Of humbled suffering sank ; and though sublime
Was thy death-deed, it was fell War's great crime
That drove thee to that act.—

But, now 'tis past,
Rejoined the Carthaginian,—to o'erbrim
Joy's cup it seems that, though your sires laid waste
My own loved fatherland, my heart hath ye embraced.—

XXXVII.

And, sister, in our hearts we thee embrace,
Said Porcia,—and partake thy bosom's thrill :
So blest is goodness that it can efface
All baneful hatreds,—yea doth sweetly fill
The soul with rapture that no more the will
Is anger's slave,—and spite can tribulate
The mind no more—that self-tormenting ill !—
For we of misery, in our earthly state,
Knew no more vulturous torture than relentless hate.

XXXVIII.

Sad and blythe truths thy soul hath mingled, said
The virtuous African ; and 'tis most strange
In man's strange history, that, ev'n while he bled,
He coaxed this vulture of the heart :—' Revenge
'Is sweet'—he madly cried ! O blissful change,
That, now, he feels 'tis sweeter to forgive !
Still happier—that no ill shall disarrange
The harmony in which all life shall live
Henceforth—but bliss of higher bliss be nutritive.

XLII.

Our Teacher taught us to forgive,—the chaste
Sophronia said ;—but, sister fair, the Law
Of old thy fathers revered nurtured haste
For vengeance : our new joys for thee must flow
With tenfold sweetness.—

Christian, though I know
Thou speakest sooth, Baruna said,—too well
I also know, that few forgave a foe
Who owned thy Teacher, and were loud to tell
How far he did in wisdom all the Wise excel.

XLIII.

I own that much was noble in thy faith ;
But, like all other faiths,—alas ! 'twas made
Subservient unto tyrant Power and Wrath,
And grew, with lapse of time, a cunning trade
Whereby the priest could pompously parade
In gold and grandeur, while his lessons told
Of meekest lowliness,—and he could wade
In human blood, ungainsayed, uncontrolled,—
Preaching of mercy and of goodness manifold !

XLIV.

What horrors have my race endured throughout
All lands called Christian, from the men called meek
And merciful ! Who did the Jew belowt
And scorn and spit upon, and on the cheek
Smite fiercest,—was deemed by all, to seek
Salvation zealously, and was upheld
Worthiest imitation. So to sneak
Into dim dens my race were driven : filth-celled
They lived : vile things from human fellowship expelled.

XLV.

Nor in their squalidness was refuge found
From Christian mercy : ' Witchcraft !—Gold !'—outeried
The plundering knave whose spotless robe around
Him did proclaim his office was to chide
And not to cheer Man's thirst for homicide :
Then was the shrunk Jew racked, and to the flame
Condemned, or, like thy Teacher, crucified,
If he refused the sacred hoard to name
He never had possessed ! Such was their Christian game !

XLVI.

I need not tell of Spain's black ' Brotherhood '
Of murder, yclept ' Holy,'—nor recal
To mind the wolvisb bands whose thirst for blood
Jew-slaughter could not slake,—who fed on all
That bore the name of Man, if one their thrall
Resisted, or but murmured at their sway :—
'Tis past !—No more their horrors shall appal
The feeble, nor afflict the strong : away
Their shapes are faded : who would wake them from decay ?

XLVII.

Be ours the theme more welcome, sisters mine,
To picture the blest future and prepare
Our spirits for the rest—the rest divine
The persecuted, hence, shall ever share
Ev'n with their persecutors : for the slayer
Shall with his victims join—to slay no more !
The lion with the lamb shall make his lair !
Rude, they were termed—yet, my sires' faith, of yore,
The curtain of man's future bliss asunder tore :—

XLVIII.

Amid their sterile mountains, Judah's bards
Saw holier visions of Earth's coming glory
Than all the minstrels who the world's awards
Of honour won, chaunting of warriors gory
And lauding as sublime Fame's transitory
Triumphs. List, sisters, to that choral strain !
How like the raptures of prophetic story
It swells !—

Heart's-ease she plucked, and did retain ;
But, to the Christian gave a lily without stain.

XLIX.

And then the happy sister sprites joined hands,
And sped in silent ecstasy along
The flower-bespangled path—while distant bands
Of cheery travellers did this strain prolong
Till gladsome thousands swelled the choral song :—
' Farewell for ever to the reign of gloom,
' Of human suffering, and grief, and wrong !
' Welcome, for Earth, her new and happy doom !
' Welcome, for franchised spirits, Hades' blissful home !

L.

' Farewell for ever to the darksome reign
' Of Fear and Hate, Revenge and Tyranny !
' How blest, that Hades shall be free from pain !
' How blest, that children upon earth shall be
' No more taught malice on their mothers' knee—
' But love for foes—till foes are no more found !
' Farewell to Earth's old evil revelry
' Of war and bloodshed ! Every brother's wound
' Shall now be healed,—and peace and love and joy abound !—

LI.

Beneath the mound, into the sculptured aisle,
Trooping, with glee, I saw the thousands wend,
Still pealing hymns of joy that their exile
Was changed from woe to bliss, and that the end
Of all Life's evils blest signs did portend
On earth, and through their spiritual clime :—
But I surceased the theme to apprehend :—
The prison-bell, with its harsh grating chime,
Rewoke me in the dreary den of Crime-made crime.

NOTES TO BOOK THE NINTH.

(1) Stanza 26.—The suicides of Porcia,—by swallowing hot coals, when other means of self-destruction were placed beyond her reach,—and of Arria, the wife of Pœtus, who was condemned to death, are familiar to almost every reader: the first is the subject of eloquent eulogy by Cicero, and the last is termed ‘the sublime’ by Voltaire.

(2) Stanza 35.—The story of the wife of Asdrubal, who cursed the treason of her husband, and then threw herself, with her children, into the flames of the temple of Esculapius, which she had set on fire, is well known to all readers of Roman history.

(3) Stanza 41.—“The virtuous matron, who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a christian, wife to the præfect of the city, and her name was Sophronia. It still remains a question among the Casuists, whether, on such occasions, suicide is justifiable.”—Gibbon: note to chap. 14.

(4) Stanza 41.—“Baruna, wife of Meir:”—Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, or the Appendix to Jahn’s ‘*Hebrew Commonwealth*’ (collected from the voluminous work of Basnage) may be referred to for a brief narrative of this suicide.

THE
PURGATORY OF SUICIDES.

BOOK THE TENTH.

I.

Hail, holiest Liberty ! who hast thy shrine
Deep in the faithful patriot's soul recess'd,—
Diffusing from thy visage light divine
That glads the dungeon's gloom and drear unrest,
Until it beams with visions overblest
Of Right triumphant over hoary Wrong,
And Truth victorious over Fraud confest,
And new-born nations joining choral song
O'er earth—become one temple for thy brother-throng.

II.

Hail, sun-bright Liberty ! Life-source of Truth,—
Without whom Knowledge waxeth sere, and falls
Into her dotage ; while with lusty youth
Thou sinewest Reason till she disentrals
Her essence of Time's dreams, nor basely crawls
At eld Authority's decrepid feet,—
But to the toil of search calmly upcalls
Her vigour, and full soon each plausible cheat
Detects, and winnoweth Folly's chaff from Wisdom's wheat.

III.

'Thou great palladium of the moral man,—
If thee by sloth self-treasonous he lose,
Or foiled by force, or duped by charlatan,—
How soon the selfish spirit doth diffuse
Its influence through blood, and bones, and thews—
Until his very form, his brow, his look,
Forfeit their grandeur,—and each gesture shews,
Ere the low whine follows his lord's rebuke,
What depth of insult, now, his slavish soul can brook.

IV.

But, garbed in humblest gear, if his birthright
Be yet unbartered, unpurloined, unstained,—
If still his forehead bear thy sigil bright,—
How noble is his mien,—how unconstrained
He stands a witness for the truth, unfeigned,
Or champion for the right,—o'erawing kings
And lordly powers, who feel as if arraigned
Before their culprit,—and with homagings
Are fain to bow, and own themselves but meaner things.

V.

With dignity so godlike, stood the sage
Of Abdera, at Nicocreon's throne,
Foiling the Cyprian tyrant in his rage :⁽¹⁾
So stood the Caledonian captive one,—
Grand in his chains,—and from the Roman won
Generous regard : so gazed, with brow unblent,
On vengeful Edward, Scotia's later son :
So, while base Gesler shook, magnificent,
Stood Tell the peerless peasant, in his hardiment.

VI.

Or what if Death, with gristliest terrors, scowl
On thy brave offspring?—They can gaze and smile!
So, in our age of grandest men, with soul
Unpierced, that spirit versatile,
Untiring Raleigh, at the axe could smile,—
Passing his finger calmly o'er the edge,
And cleping it a med'cine sharp, the while,
But most remedial sickness to assauge,—
Conscious Death could not mar his fame's high heritage.

VII.

So smiled our bravest, truest, martyred sire,—
Fell Superstition's victim,—who could cheer,
With heart that veritably quelled the fire,
His brother sufferer, and more frail compeer,—
Breathing those death-words that will fill the ear,
And threw the heart of England, through all time,—
Until her children a mind-rampart rear
Shall foil the Jesuit's craft, and save our clime
From witnessing, again, the Priest's bold deeds of crime.

VIII.

So smiled thy own, thy darling champion,
A true-born Briton names not without pride
That thrills the soul—our noble Algernon,—
Who gloried at the scaffold that he died
For thine—the Good Old Cause,—nor falsified
The promise of his youth. When, from thy womb,
My country! shall such men be multiplied?
O Liberty! o'er England's germs resume
Thy quickening power,—or wake our fathers from the tomb!

IX.

We are become a servile, sordid crew :
The grandeur of our lineage is forgot :
We crawl as if nor peer nor franklin knew
His fathers walked erect, and parleyed not
With Patience ere their swords the tyrant smote,
Or humbled him to meekness : we ne'er turn
Unto the page where their great deeds are wrote,—
And read, and ponder, till our bosoms burn
To think the yoke they spurned, so long our necks have worn !

X.

Our men of promise are a recreant horde :
Ev'n he who bears that glorious patriot name
For which the friend of Sydney a record,
Gold-writ, hath won on England's roll of fame,
Starts, like an actor who hath oped the drame,
Back from his part, afeard to play it through :
And he, the golden-tongued,—a thing of shame
Made by his whims,—to self-respect untrue,—
What will he next—the spaniel of old Waterloo ?

XI.

Oh ! haste to hide thee in the charnel grave,—
Thou Harlequin-Demosthenes !—ere change
Shall leave thee not a semblant speck to save
Of that rich monument which thou, with strange
Fatuity, hast toiled to disarrange
As hotly as to carve ! Give up thy strife
To mar it more,—and list the White's revenge,—
Friend of the Black !—'twill cleave to thee through life,—
The ' Bastille'-curse—from Man severed from child and wife !

XII.

Arch-Traitor to thy kind !—scourge of the Poor !—
A word from thee had dashed their poison-cup
To atoms ;—but thou, wantonly, didst more
Prefer to their lean lips to hold it up !—
Aye, wast to thine own vanity the dupe
So fully, as to claim that thou shouldst bear
The dread weight of the crime ! Would thou might'st sup
For ages of that chalice ! ‘ Bastile’-fare,
Perchance, a med'cine were thy reason to repair.

XIII.

Beshrew thy heart ! but it was bold, as well
As villainous,—responsibility
To court—so foully, darkly damnable !—
Head-robber of the savage band to be
Should perpetrate upon humanity
A theft so daring as would make recoil
The sternest heart of ancient Tyranny !—
Of Nature's rights the hapless wretch to spoil—
Who hath no bread, because his lords refuse him toil.

XIV.

And dost thou, scouted changeling ! madly dream
This lawless law will save ‘ their lordships’ land ?’
Or, that to gaol and eunuch men the stream
Of discontent can stop,—and Misery's band
Convert to sneaking slaves lords may command
At will ? As surely as thy head grows gray
In this thy monstrous sin,—if not by brand,
By mightier means, the Poor will win their way
To right,—and shout when worms hold riot in thy clay !

XV.

O ! not by changeling, tyrant, tool, or knave,
 Thy march, blest Liberty ! can now be stayed.—
 The wand of Guttemberg—behold it wave !
 The spell is burst !—the dark enchantments fade
 Of wrinkled Ignorance !—’twas she betrayed
 Thy first-born children,—and so oft threw down
 The mounds of Freedom. Lo ! the Book its aid
 Hath brought !—the feudal serf—though still a clown,
 Doth read ;—and, where his sires gave homage, pays—a frown :

XVI.

The sinewy artisan,—the weaver lean,—
 The shrunken stockinger,—the miner swarth,—
 Read, think, and feel ; and in their eyes the sheen
 Of burning thought betokens thy young birth
 Within their souls, blythe Liberty ! That earth
 Would thus be kindled from the humble spark
 Ye caught from him of Mentz, and scattered forth,—
 Faust,—Koster,—Caxton !—not ‘ the clerk,’
 Himself, could prophecy in your own mid-age dark !

XVII.

And yet, O Liberty ! these humble toilers
 The true foundation for thy reign begun.—
 Aye, and while throne-craft decks Man’s murderous spoilers,
 While feverous Power mocks the weary sun
 With steed-throned effigies of Wellington,
 And columned piles to Nelson,—Labour’s child
 Turns from their haughty forms, to muse upon
 The page by their blood-chronicle defiled ;—
 Then, bending o’er his toil, weighs well the record wild.

XVIII.

Aye, they are thinking,—at the frame, and loom,
At bench, and forge, and in the bowelled mine ;—
And when the scanty hour of rest is come,
Again they read,—to think, and to divine
How it hath come to pass that Toil must pine
While sloth doth revel ;—how the game of blood
Hath served their tyrants ;—how the scheme malign
Of priests hath crushed them ; and resolve doth bud
To band,—and to bring back the primal Brotherhood.

XIX.

What, though, a while, the braggart-tongued poltroon,
False demagogue, or hireling base, impede
The union they affect to aid ? Right soon
Deep thought to such ‘ conspiracy ’ shall lead
As will result in a successful deed—
Not forceful, but fraternal : for the Past
Hath warned the Million that they must succeed
By will—and not by war. Yet, to hold fast
Men’s rage when they are starving—’tis a struggle vast !

XX.

A struggle that were vain, unless the Book
Had kindled light within the Toiler’s soul,
And taught him though ’tis difficult to brook
Contempt with hunger,—yet, he must control
Revenge, or it will leave him more a thrall :
The pike,—the brand,—the blaze,—his lesson saith,
Would leave Old England as they have left Gaul—
Bondaged to sceptred Cunning. Thus, their wrath
The Million quell—but look for Right with firmest faith.

XXI.

Oh ! might I see that triumph ere I die—
The poor, oppressed, contemned, and hunger'd throng
Hold festival for Labour's victory
O'er Mammon, Pride, and Sloth,—for Right o'er Wrong :
Oh ! might I hear them swell the choral song—
' The Toilers' Rights are won ! our Fatherland
' Is fully free !'—with joy to rest among
The solemn dead, at Nature's high command,
I'd haste : nor ask to stay the speed of one life-sand !

XXII.

Nor selfish is the wish,—however vain :
From boyhood, Greece, and our old Commonweal
I worshipped ; but 'twas gnawing hunger's pain
I saw your lank and fainting forms reveal—
Poor trampled stockings !—that made me feel
'Twas time to be in earnest,—nor regard
Man's freedom merely as a theme for zeal
In hours of emulous converse, or for bard
Weaving rapt fancies in pursuit of Fame's reward.

XXIII.

I threw me in the gap,—defying scorn,
Threats, hatred, pois'nous tongues,—to front your foes ;
And this hath come of it,—that I have worn
The fetters for your sake. Yet, now the close
Of this captivity is near, no throes
Of anger, sorrow, or regret, are mine
For aught that I have suffered ; but your woes—
Poor victims ! who by grinding tricksters pine,—
Breed thoughts that with my hopes their tortures intertwine.

XXIV.

I would review my course,—that so I may
Shun, for the future, aught unwise, unjust,
Untrue to Freedom,—if my rugged way
I sometimes trod,—like other things of dust,—
In error. Inly can I look, and trust
My heart's clear witness, that I never swerved
To wilful wrong. Yet thy demands august,
Great Truth ! I here obey, with spirit nerved
By deep reflection—healthful aid but ill preserved

XXV.

To him who mixeth with the whirl and rage
Of popular commotion :—here I hold
Thy mirror to my soul,—and deeply pledge
My heart it shall by clamour be controlled
No more to thread the mazes manifold
Of crookt Expediency,—nor through ill haste
To end the Toiler's woe, to leave the bold
And simple path he led : union unchaste
With Faction will I shun—taught by the erring past.

XXVI.

Here then, O holiest Liberty ! my heart
I lay upon thine altar,—undismayed,
Unswerving, unsubdued : the afterpart
Of life it aims to play with healthier aid
Of wisdom,—but no guilty thoughts upbraid :
It asks but to be kept from sordid stain
As free as now : let consciousness pervade
Each pulse through life that still by gold or gain
Unbought it beats,—and it shall shun no toil, no pain.

XXVII.

O welcome, even if its blood be shed
For thee, blest Freedom !—only keep it pure !
Welcome, the living death more deeply dread
Of calumny, by evil shapes obscure
That haunt the patriot darkling, and secure
From Truth's Ithuriel spear, their poisons vend :
Welcome, that keenest heart-ache—forfeiture
Of friendship true : welcome, all pangs that rend
The heart—if pure unto the grave it may descend !

XXVIII.

Night's shadows gather once more in the sky,—
Tombing another day of thraldom's term,
And leaving few more days to fortify
The heart so that it meet freedom with firm
And peaceful throb. What mingled feelings germ
Within me,—what quick hosts of battling thought !
Will, then, the world assume so strange a form ?
And shall I feel, in it with change deep fraught,
As if I had been dead, and were to life new brought ?

XXIX.

Ah ! soon it will appear the same poor vale
Of tears ;—and, soon, my journey through its gloom
Or radiance will be o'er. Let me not fail
To keep my soul's resolve,—and then—let come
What will, ere I attain my final doom,
Right blythely will I on !—yea, meet grim Death
Himself, in peace : for, what viaticum
Need we, if Death be unto Life the path,
But truthfulness of heart ?—is it not more than faith ?

XXX.

And, if the grave indeed bath nought beyond
Its cold confine, of thought, or joy, or love ;—
If there we bid farewell unto the fond
Cleavings o' th' heart, for ever—and shall prove
No more what rapture 'tis when hearts commove
With mutual tenderness——

I will pursue
That theme no more. This love of life, enwove
Within me, Death itself may yet subdue—
But, while I live 'twill burn its being to renew !

XXXI.

I dreamt again,—but 'twas a gladsome dream :
A dream of portents beatifical :
A dream where the prophetic brain did teem
With glorious visions of high festival
In sculptured aisle, and dome, and rainbowed hall :
A festival of Brotherhood and Mind,
By suicidal spirits held, from thrall
Of Evil freed,—and mystically designed
To' adumbrate future bliss for Earth and humankind.

XXXII.

As where the way to some hoar fane of Nile,—
Carnac, or Luxor, or far Ibsamboul,—
Lay through an imaged path, for many a mile,
Of sphinxes huge or lions, so that lull
With abject awe and fitted for the rule
Of priests the worshipper approached,—thus seemed
The aisle fit path to fill with beautiful
Expectancies the ghostly throng that streamed
Along its wilderness of sculptures, as I dreamed.

XXXIII.

And when the dome we raught, our ecstasy
Of hope ripened to rapturous overbliss
With what the spiritual sense did hear and see
Beneath that span colossal: Music's voice
A sweetness gushed fit to emparadise
The plastic forms of wisdom and of worth
That there in mystic apotheosis
Of statued life reposed: forms of old Earth
They were—the best, the noblest children of her birth:

XXXIV.

Range above range rose many-fashioned niche,—
A caverned space as wonderful and vast
As that weird city which few travellers reach—
Idumæan Petra, in the dangerous waste; (2)
And in such order were the worthies placed
That they, though mute, the world's progressive story
Of spirit-toil revealed, from first to last,—
And how the spark, first caught by sages hoary
From Nature's fire, Mind nurtured to a flame of glory.

XXXV.

From ancient Orient to the late-born West,—
Bard, thinker, devotee of enterprize,
Philanthropist and patriot, soul of quest
For Nature's secrets, child in whose wrapt eyes
She glows so lovely that his spirit plies
Its powers to imitate her forms,—the gems
From Earth's clay gathered,—in immortal guise
Seemed there enshrined,—beings whose very names
Shed splendour more ineffable than diadems.

XXXVI.

A spiritual Pantheon of the Good,
The Free, the Tireless, and the truly Great,
It was : a mansion of soul-sanctitude
That held the visitant spirit in a state
Of ecstasied entrancement—all-elate
With love and wonder, and yet hushed with awe :
And Mind seemed sounds symphonious to create
That heightened bliss, pondering on what it saw,—
So that our thoughts germed music, by some unknown law.

XXXVII.

Anon, this minstrelsy so wondrous ceased ;
And, with a groupe of spirits who stood nigh,—
Gazing as if they would for ever feast
On what they saw, yet never satisfy
Their yearning souls,—forthwith, methought, that I
Became consociate,—hearing how they spoke
Their glowing thoughts, by numbers that swept by
Still undistract, and still with sateless look
Scanning the sculptures as they were a priceless book.

XXXVIII.

Of widely-scattered nations were these ghosts,
And widely-spoken names :—for nought was sealed,
In this most vivid dream, of all the hosts
That Phantasy surveyed. First, was revealed,
He who in Athens to himself beheld
Three hundred statues raised,—Demetrius
Phalereus,—whom the City-sieging king expelled,
And unto vessels for the vilest use
The statues turned,—deeming their loved shapes dangerous.⁽³⁾

XXXIX.

Exalted forms of ever-glorious Greece
Were magnets to his eyes : her Poet-choir
Divine,—where Homer, with the love increase
Of time had fostered for the peerless sire
Of song in the world's heart, sat crowned,—the fire
Of soul, wanting its natural mirror, gleaming
Throughout his sightless face : sons of the lyre
Around, beneath him, sculptured stood, each seeming
With awe to mark the splendour from his bald brow beaming.

XL.

On these th' Athenian gazed, and on the throng
Of god-like labourers for human weal :
The lowly Socrates,—loftiest among
The band fraternal,—less by fervid zeal
Than by his lowliness seeming t' excel
Th' excelling throng. Neither on patriot shapes
With less love did he gaze :—names that to tell
Make monarchs quake, in spite of Time's long lapse,—
For still some slave, who hears, from their hard yoke escapes.

XLI.

Fast by Demetrius stood a ghostly form
Of later times, and of less peaceful deed :—
Berthier,—the favourite of that Bird of Storm,
The ravening Gallic eagle,—whose fierce greed
Ceasing to aid, praise for defection bred
Remorse so torturous in his soul, he spurned
The thought of life, and from its torment fled.⁽¹⁾
With throes remorseful he no longer burned,
But, with the Athenian, o'er those shapes of virtue yearned.

XLII.

For though full many a sage philanthropist,
High orator, and bard of comely France
Were statued there, with emblems due devised,
Their excellence proclaiming,—yet the glance
Of the war-wearied Frenchman, whose romance
For his gay, glory-stricken land was gone,
On Hellene forms made sweeter tarriance.—
Like preference shared the spirit of Wolfe Tone,
That by him I saw stand,—Hibernia's patriot son.

XLIII.

Yet, in his country's Grattan, in the face
Of brave Fitzgerald, and the generous brow
Of fated Emmett, did th' Hibernian trace
Features that stirred the warm fraternal flow
Within his essence and dispread the glow
Of rapture o'er his visage. Paramount
In virtue, still, he deemed that glorious show
Of Greeks, and did the patriot deeds recount
Of Hellas,—vaunting her true Glory's primal fount.

XLIV.

One stately form there was who on late men
Stood in absorbéd gaze,—strange thoughts of home,
And change, and Wrong that made the world a den
Of lawless beasts, revolving, till a gloom
Curtained his brow. Yet, joy 'gan, soon, resume
Its settled reign within his new-born soul.—
The spirit of imperial Montezume
It was : that victim of ambition foul,
Whose regal heart disdained the Spaniard's base control.⁽⁵⁾

XLV.

Most wistfully he scanned th' intrepid calm
That in the eye of great Columbus dwelt,
Till sighs broke forth ; and though a healing balm
Las Casas' love-look o'er his essence dealt,
'Twas but a pause unto the grief he felt
For his lost race,—and he had wailed aloud,
But that his wild eye 'lighted where he knelt
In soul, and owned the majesty that glowed
In Washington's benignly grand similitude.

XLVI.

Last of the groupe the patriot Shades I saw
Of Romilly and Whitbread,—whose rapt gaze
America's great son seemed oft to draw
Aside from Alfred—for like glorious rays,
That did ev'n disembodied vision daze,
Streamed from the sculptures of the civic chief
And diademmed philanthropist : their praise
They told, and would have mourned the sojourn brief
Of such blest forms on earth,—but rapture banished grief!—

XLVII.

The glorious toil is o'er, my brother!—spake
The soul of Romilly,—while with th' intense
Joy of beneficence he seemed to quake ;—
The glorious toil is o'er!—blest prevalence
Mercy hath won :—the evil effluence
Of blood by brethren shed glad Earth shall see
No more ! Against the grim armipotence
Of Anger, Hate, Revenge, and Cruelty,
The toil was hard ;—but from their blight all Life is free !

XLVIII.

Who would have said, but they who felt her power,—
Before the still small voice of Gentleness
The great ones of the Earth should one day cower,
And kings her true divinity confess ;—
The battle-field be green and thunderless,—
The scaffold and the gibbet disappear,—
The dungeon vanish,—and, no more, distress
Hunger and discontent raise troublous fear
Of violence, and knit the ruler's brow austere ?——

XLIX.

Yet, this is her triumphant marvel-work !—
Said Whitbread's spirit :—'twas her genial breath
Nourished most healthfully the deathless spark
Of Freedom, when the streams of blood which wrath
Had shed half-quenched it, and men's hope and faith
In Liberty was changed to dread, and they
With tears of hushed despair sighed that the path
Of Thralldom must be trod—thinking the sway
Of Sceptres better than the howl of wolves of prey.—

L.

Brother, thy thoughts are of my fatherland,—
Said Berthier ;—and if this our new-born joy
Did not the phantasms of Earth's wrong disband
Great grief were mine. But this doth still destroy
The spectrous visitings which would annoy
My spirit—that although the strife for Right
Was urged by advocates who did employ
Wrong's weapons in their overzeal,—the might
Of Truth, at length, hath made her victress in the fight.

LI.

'Twas long and toilful,—and, in every clime,
Too oft in error did her champions seize
The murderous sword. The register of Time
Is a dark volume ;—and what soul that sees
His autograph in characters that please
His conscience throughly, on the record writ ?
That all is well at last, may well appease
The self-accusing shapes which still would flit
Through memory,—and loathe their long-known haunts to quit.

LII.

Our penal throes are ended here : Earth's sorrow,
From war and violence, hate and revenge,
Is past, ne'er to return :—O let us borrow
Help from such thoughts our spirits to estrange
Still more and more from woe !—
This joyous change
May well absorb our thought,—the Shade began
Of noble Montezuma,—yet to range
Her youthful haunts the soul can scarce refrain :
Bliss hath not changed us into things marmorean.

LIII.

Love for dear Mexico and my crushed race,
Trampled by haughty Cortez and his crew,
Eternity itself cannot efface
Within my essence,—nor regret subdue
That Fate should thus relentlessly pursue
One hapless people, and their glory sweep
Into oblivion. While I with ye view
These glorious forms, how can I fail to weep
That my sires' deeds of worth are lost in darkness deep ?

LIV.

What am I but the shadow of a name ?—
My people's virtues, glory, arts, unknown,—
Hurl'd by their conquerors to barbarian shame
Though they deserved it not—but might have shone
Among the nations, had not Spain's dark frown
Of pride and cruelty spread woe and waste
Where'er it fell, blighting the happy zone
Our fathers' sons long held, their daughters graced :—
Oh no ! I cannot tear from memory all the Past !

LV.

Nathless, my brothers, I with ye rejoice
That after Earth's long ages of dispute,
Conquest and blood, the gentle, healing voice
Of Goodness doth prevail. Murders pollute
My ancient clime no more ; and though the foot
Of strangers treads upon our fathers' dust,—
Since they have learned to live like brothers, mute
The Mexican shall be of wrongs that thrust
His people from the soil : deeds bloody and unjust.

LVI.

No image of my fathers I behold
Among these forms of worth, on which to doat
With fond affection ; but the heart is cold
Whose joys are all from selfishness extraught :—
My heart doth swell with love tow'rd's all who wrought
Out liberty and peace and brotherhood,
For poor Humanity,—by toilful thought,—
Through scorn and suffering : as with a flood
Of grateful love it swells for all the great and good !—

LVII.

Nobly thou hast discharged thy generous soul,—
Th' Hibernian spirit said :—Mind cannot lose
All impress of the Past,—cannot control
Her frequent wish to roam where early vows
Were made to Truth and Freedom—shapes that rouse
Th' antagonistic phantasies of Fraud
And Tyranny. Nor should the soul accuse
Herself for ire at wrong : 'twere vile to laud
That which is evil : it demands our censure broad.

LVIII.

Less were an error ; but to pass beyond
An upright indignation were to bring
Back on our souls self-torment, and surround
Our essences again with suffering.
The memory of wrong, since, now, the sting
Of base revenge is drawn, shall minister
To higher bliss—to sweeter revelling
In joy ; for it shall be the harbinger
Unto the heart's sweet sense—Forgiveness triumphs there !

LIX.

If on the fateful Past thou look'st to grieve,—
How much more might I utter mournful plaint
For Erin's woe ? Spirit ! it should relieve
Thy soul that sword and torture did attain
The lives of thy sires' race. Better than faint,
And pine, and howl, and curse their tyrant lords
For ages, and still feel a strange constraint
To live and multiply mean serfish hordes :—
Such woes my memory of her fatherland records.

LX.

Thy race by death were happily set free
From their tormentors : mine remained to gnash
Their teeth, in rags and hunger,—yet to see
Their conquerors revel ;—to behold each flash
Of freedom fail, and by its failure dash
Their hopes to deep despair ;—to glow and burn
Again with patriot ire,—and yet by rash
Outbreak to plunge in hopeless horror. Turn
And look on thy lost race, spirit, to triumph :—not to mourn !—

LXI.

My brother spirits !—said th' Athenian ghost,—
This theme to me were fruitful of regret,
If, 'mid these glories, I could be engrossed
With tristful thoughts. Did not the tyrant fret
The limbs of Hellas with the chain ? Forget
Ye that the mother-land of Freedom wore
The gyves of Slavery, for ages ? Let
That mournful thought lead ye to mourn no more
For aught your brethren suffered in the days of yore.

LXII.

Save her few mountain-fastnesses, old earth
Has not a spot where men the tyrant-yoke
Of brother-men have never borne. Let mirth—
High, holy, blissful mirth in us be woke
That world-wide bondage is for ever broke,
And free beings fill the universe. Not sadness
Should rise while back upon the Past we look :
But grateful joy that Man's career of madness
Hath wise fruition—age-long woe doth end in gladness.

LXIII.

Still let us drink with ecstasy and wonder,
 As at a living fountain, lessons sweet
 While on the lofty lineaments we ponder
 Of all Earth's Great and Good ; and still repeat
 This precious thought—that we our brethren greet
 In these bright shapes. What their meek souls attained
 Of lofty purpose, patient power to treat
 Their foes with gentleness ;—what height they gained
 Of mental grandeur ;—how by charm of meekness reigned

LXIV.

O'er fiercest natures, and their rage subdued ;—
 How persevering love won ev'n the foes
 Who thirsted for their blood to doff their rude
 And murderous frowns, and smilingly disclose
 The heart's regenerate kindness ;—how the throes
 Of pain they conquered,—and, triumphing, hurled
 Thralldom, revenge, hate, envy,—all Man's woes,
 For ever, from the groaning, bleeding world,—
 And over sea and strand the gonfalon unfurled

LXV.

Of Truth and Love, Knowledge and Gentleness :
 All their eternal triumphs we may share
 In this exultant thought—the fair impress
 Of our humanity they meekly wear ;
 And of their glory we are, each, the heir—
 For our own brethren's heritage to us
 Belongs. Brothers, be blythe, be debonair !
 And let our happiest thoughts the reins give loose
 While we gaze on these brother-forms illustrious !—

LXVI.

Such hortatives sad broodings to dispel,
And revel to the full in their new joys,
Th' Athenian uttered; and a blythe farewell,
Methought, they, forthwith, bade to all alloys
Of happiness;—and yet no overpoise
Their spirits felt: their joy was fraught with high
And eloquent descant that became the Wise,
The Noble, and the Good: nor did they vie
In speech,—but held discourse shorn of earth's vanity.—

LXVII.

Anon, woke thrilling sounds omnipotent,
On earth, to null all thoughts but such as sprung
Up armèd in the brain while forth was sent
The trumpet's peal,—but such as sought a tongue,
Yet found it not, while horn and harp notes clung
Unto each other's sweetness,—or the heart
Melted to faintness, with rapt wailings wrung
Of hautboy and bassoon. Such prelude, thwart
The dome piercing, seemed well-known signal to depart.

LXVIII.

Soon, blent these brothers were with throngs that now
Flocked onward where, beyond the vault's vast span,
I saw revealed a dazzling heaven-dight bow,
Grand beyond likeness, and by wondrous plan
Unto the hall with roof cerulean
Serving for gate-way-arch. Thither to speed,
With uplift gaze, the spirit-crowd began,—
While to the prelude movements did succeed
Of all superbest sounds the mind devours with greed.

LXIX.

Full-puls'd tympanum and deep-toned string
Proclaimed dense myriads marching with the step
Of stately joy to some vast gathering ;—
While, ever and anon, the trill and sweep
Of flutes and viols caused the heart to leap
With foretaste of its banquet. Mind hath known,
Ev'n in its house of clay, rapture as deep
From Handel's giant pomps on organ blown,
While 'long cathedral aisles some pageant proud was strown.

LXX.

Beneath the wondrous arch of heavenly sheen,
I passed into the hall, when—lo ! no more
Monarchal thrones and monster shapes were seen
Within ; but, from the middle of its floor
Immense, shelved gently upward countless store
Of sculptured seats extending to the bound
Of that ellipsis vast,—and wisest lore
By plastic art into each seat seemed wound—
So that the mind read deepest lessons all around.

LXXI.

And, on the rim of the ellipse, where, erst,
Wild shapes reared irkingly, as if
To prop the rainbowed roof,—in dread 'twould burst
Upon their heads,—stood images of life,
Bright as the sun, their countenances rife
With blended beauty, intellect, and love :
Fair plum'd wings they had,—but 'twas a strife
For mind to judge what it did best behave
To say they were—such grace seemed in their forms enwove.

LXXII.

And, as the myriad multitude swarmed in,
Filling the spacious amphitheatre,
In spirit-whispers some of seraphin
And some of genii talked, and guessed these were
Such mystic essences. Interpreter
None needed long: the soul 'gan soon perceive
They were her own creations, which the stir
Of glorious brother-thoughts had power t' enweave
To sensuous shapes—as if they did to sight upheave.

LXXIII.

With visages as bright, with looks as blest
As kindly and intelligent, all beamed
And smiled upon each other, while their rest
They took upon the graven seats. None deemed
Himself nobler than others: none esteemed
His brother meanly: pride and rank and state
Had vanished,—and, all equal, as beseeemed
A brother-throng, together Essence sate,
In love, of humblest citizen and potentate.

LXXIV.

Aloft, o'er all, the roof with splendour hued
Of bows celestial still was self-suspended.
The regal forms whose blazoned pomp I viewed
In earlier dreams, now sat with sages blended,—
Uncrowned, unsceptred, all their haught looks ended,—
With bards, and workers-out of human weal,
And patriots who in lofty deed transcended
Their earthly fellows. Ghosts of erring zeal
For faiths fantastic, creeds incomprehensible,

LXXV.

And cruel idol-worships, whom I saw
Climbing the Mount of Vanity,—the wild
Lone dweller in the cave, whose rage with awe
I witnessed 'mong his snakes,—the Poet-child
With his lamenting harp, who wept, exiled
To forest-solitude,—the tuneful choir
Of bards who walked the grove,—the band who toiled,
For aye, to kindle the fierce fatal fire
Of soul wherewith France lit the devastating pyre

LXXVI.

Of Liberty,—a moiety of the ghosts
Who idly lay along the beach i' th' land
Of Sloth and Desolation,—Sorrow's hosts,—
And crowds of those fair forms who, hand-in-hand,
Sped o'er the pasture-plain, with greetings bland,
And garlanded with flowers,—all sat arrayed
In simple yet attractive guise : a band
Of happy souls innumerable : parade
Wrath, sorrow, guilt, for ever from their essence fled !

LXXVII.

Soft consentaneous murmurs soon were heard
'Mid which distinguishable grew the name
Of sage Lyncurgus,—whereat claricord
And viol, clarion, pipe and drum became
Mute as expectant listeners,—and the claim
Fraternal to receive his speech, with meek
Yet manly front he rose to answer. Maim
No longer were the powers of voice : the Greek [speak.—
Did seem, and they that followed, with Earth's tongues to

LXXVIII.

Brother and sister spirits, to rehearse
Our joy,—he said,—what volumed tongue hath skill?
Our happiness, like the eternal source
From which it springs, doth ever over-fill
And over-run,—so that our bliss we still
Augment, commingling bliss. I triumph not
To think me a true seer: too deep the thrill
Of ecstasy doth move me that all doubt
And guess are past, and this beatitude is raught.

LXXIX.

Brothers, this blest reality hath swept
The films of mystery from the general mind;
And he who doubted most now an adept
Becomes in tracing Nature's progress: blind
Were many, once: but how it was designed
From earliest eld, that pain corporeal,—
That hate, and all self-tortures of the mind
Should pass away, and brotherhood prevail
And joy,—all now perceive with vision spiritual.

LXXX.

Ye who, with opulence of speech endowed,
Excel, begin the never-tiring theme—
What mighty influences did long enshroud
Themselves from vulgar gaze, and yet did seem
To Nature's true disciples with the beam
Of splendour's self revealed,—and sure to drown
And overwhelm all error, as a stream
Resistless sweeps all human barriers down—
Or as Light's genial smile o'ercometh Night's drear frown.

LXXXI.

How we now wonder, while our ken afar
Travels from these joy-seats,—surveys the dome
Resplendent with full many an exemplar
Of human virtues,—and enrapt doth roam
Along the dazzling aisle where graces bloom
Ineffable,—how we now wonder Truth
So long was hid! Be thine th' exordium,
O Mithridates! to pourtray the growth
Of Good, and how she vanquished all her foes uncouth!—

LXXXII.

So spake the great Laconian, and his seat
Meekly resumed, while gentle murmurings rose
From myriads who would fain the sage entreat
His descant to prolong: but no applause
He sought, and signified he lacked dispose,
By silent smiles. Disrobed of pomp and pride,
With truer glory clad than regal shows,
The spirit of the Pontic king complied
With the wise Spartan's call—by thousands ratified.—

LXXXIII.

Lycurgus, though thy modesty would wave
Our full soul's tribute,—he arose and said,—
Yet here I laud thy wisdom deep, and suave
Forbearance 'mid the scorn that on thy head
We in our rashness—by old pomps misfed
And overblown—poured, when we should have praised.
Wisely thou say'st the lessons here outspread,
'Through hall and dome and aisle, have in us raised
Wonder that we so long in ignorance on them gazed.

LXXXIV.

How glorious is the vision now 'tis filled
With meaning to our spirits!—all unlike
The vanities our pomp-slaved thought did build
To lull our sense of pain, and that made quick
Evanishment when reason shook her sick
Lethargic bondage off. The beauteous aisle
Designed by graces architectonic
To pourtray outward Nature's varied pile—
Now knows each spirit-denizen of self-exile:—

LXXXV.

Nor this alone, but man's own outward form
And potency. And even as on earth
Love for the outer world did widely germ
In man, and love for self,—while of no worth
Seemed intellectual wealth, but Mind a dearth
Of noblest images did long unfold—
So yon vast dome, designed to shadow forth
Man's inner nature, till of late no mould
Of virtue held,—though it doth now rich treasure hold.

LXXXVI.

For ages did the lesson us invite
To contemplation,—but the soul was held
In earth's old bonds of prejudice, nor right
From wrong discerned. In thralldom thus we dwelled
Of self deceit: vile thralldom, though we swelled
With blindly arrogant imaginings.
Darkness and vagueness from the soul expelled,—
Her chambers filled with Virtue's symbolings,—
Reason disdaineth pride and its false glistenings.

LXXXVII.

And now our nature's stately portraiture
We view. The aisle is fitting vestibule
Unto the dome stored with memorials pure—
Like cultured intellect with beautiful
Exterior ;—and then Reason's lofty rule,
Where prejudice was paramount, appears :
From proud and tyrant phantasies the soul
Is freed ; and, since free thought her essence cheers,
Free thought in every human spirit she reveres.

LXXXVIII.

Sage Spartan, thus I read our visioned state.
Rehearsal, how our sufferings passed away,
And how old Earth became regenerate,
I yield unto my brethren,—though I may,
For opening of the theme, thus much essay :
'Twas conquest over Evil physical
That ushered in Earth's glorious brother-day :—
Whence came, by law of sympathy whose veil
Is still unrent, our soul-state beatifical.

LXXXIX.

I judge that Earth had still in bondage been
To Error, had the sons of enterprize
And science, unobservant, failed to glean
The truths Great Nature spread before the eyes
Of heedless man, whose passion for life's toys
Robbed him of its true treasures, and so doomed
Him all his days with pain to agonize,
With want and woe : a creature spirit-gloomed,
Though tenanting a world where jocund beauty bloomed.

XC.

A world whose elements were his to wield
And govern. Now,—behold the storm-tossed sea
His pathway!—see his chariots o'er it wheeled
More swiftly than o'er land, by energy
Electric—which men deemed a mystery,
Or sign of wrath divine, till from the cloud
A sage, with children's kite, and string, and key,
Drew the winged essence, and the truth foreshewed,
Unwittingly, how, one day, men would tame the proud

XCI.

All-scathing power, and dandle its huge strength
With childlike effort! Mountain, stream, and mine
Their wealth afford him: Earth, through all the length
And breadth and depth of her rotund confine,—
Th' impalpable and vital chrystalline
Itself, are, each, his servitor! Of want
Men talk as of some ancient fable: pine
They cannot, for the soil, exuberant
Rendered by art, of food is over-ministrant.

XCII.

The senses know no craving: neither strife
Nor guile to win indulgence, or obtain
What all enjoy, embitters human life:
Disease is banished—until mortal pain
Approaches:—ev'n the bounds of life's domain
Are trebly larger. Brothers, do I deem
Aright that mortal men and spirits gain
Their high beatitude, because supreme
Men grew o'er natural Evil? But I yield the theme.—

XCIII.

He ceased, abruptly, feeling modest fear
His speech might seem assumptive occupance
Of thought where all were equal : to revere
The humblest, thus, the highest Puissance
Was brought by sense of due allegiance
To Nature and Equality: The ghost
Of Cato rose,—after short hesitance,—
For sternest spirits of all haughty boast
Seemed stript ; and thus he argued 'mid the spir'tual host :—

XCIV.

O Mithridates, none will raise dispute
Against thy judgment,—yet I deem the end
Thou hadst not raught,—but left for our pursuit
Thy argument begun. That earth doth lend
Her general wealth to men, and they now bend
Our old dread masters—lightning, wind, and flood—
Unto their will,—and that these conquests tend
To bring our happy state,—were hardihood
For any to deny what long for truth hath stood.

XCV.

While with the elements, for foes, Man warred,
Want, pain, disease, were his sure heritage
Afflictive : hostile life bred in him ruthless, hard,
Vindictive thoughts : and thus, from age to age,
Men lived—the same distempered lineage
In mind and body. Yet, thou say'st full well,
Great Nature's truths were open ;—and the page
Had mortals scanned,—each pregnant syllable
Divining,—Evil they had earlier learned to quell.

XCVI.

The fault lay not in Nature, but in Man—
The slothful pupil in her school, or wild
And perverse truant after vice. Her plan
Was stern, but wise—to train her favourite child
To cope with obstacles, lest he, beguiled
By over-ease, should an ignoble thrall
Become to pleasure. The great mother smiled
Even while she seemed to frown : her child in all
Her discipline found toil did some worse ill forestall :—

XCVII.

Nay more :—that labour brought its unalloyed
And precious sweet, while sloth 'mid plenty took
All appetite away, or luxury cloyed
The sense until the Man beneath its yoke
Bowed, and became bestial in thought and look.
One obstacle o'ercome, the mind was fired
To nobler strife :—thus Nature ne'er forsook
Her offspring : all her matron cares conspired
To raise him :—he, perverse, the bestial state desired.

XCVIII.

'Tis, then, unto the Few, the tireless Few,
Who through all ages and in every clime
Pursued the Good, our gratitude is due.
Thus moral, mental conquest was the prime
Of human victories : triumph sublime
O'er outward elements sprang from the wreath
Of moral victory ; and through all time
They shall be held glorious who did bequeath
Lessons of moral struggle in their lives or death.—

XCIX.

So spake the high-soul'd Roman Stoic, whom
 His Grecian exemplars followed with zeal,
 Zeno, and meek Cleanthes ; and their doom
 That, first, Man's conquest o'er himself the weal
 Prepared of future men, and did reveal
 To him his latent power to nullify
 Earth's outward ills,—strengthened, with kindred zeal,
 Clitomachus,—for here had ceased to vie
 The sect of Plato with the Porch, for mastery.

C.

Like judgment rose and uttered, Metrocles,
 Who honoured age and royal favour fled
 To shun men's jealousy. But now to seize
 The argument,—though not by passion led
 Or unfraternal thought,—Lucretius sped ;
 And while he left ungainsayed what in praise
 Of human conquests these, through zeal, had said,—
 In calm reflective strain and gentle phrase
 He shewed the victors oft had won no truthful bays.—

CI.

Spirits, ye well have shown that to the ken
 Of universal man wide open lay
 The book of Nature,—said the bard : the men
 Ye also wisely laud who o'er their clay
 Superior rose, and, for their kind, the way
 Opened to nobler life and high command
 O'er outward ill : but know ye not that they
 Were fitted for their work by Nature's hand,—
 From embryos in the primal purposes she planned ?

CII.

That Nature's volume lay unspelled so long—
Attribute to her wisdom which doth shun
Rash haste : she forms her favourites lithe, but strong
To bear and to endure, as well as run
Their race and slack not till the goal is won.
Neither forget how many sought to find
Out Nature's ways, but failed. Sought they the boon,
Then, vainly, through sheer impotence of mind,—
Or was successful quest for later men designed ?

CIII.

Brothers, have noblest intellects, late-born,
In grasp excelled the mighty Stagyrte ?
Did any cast o'er Nature's face extern
Larger discourse, or with more piercing sight
Scan her deep secrets, or pour fuller light
Intense of Reason on her footsteps broad
That men might mark her purposes aright ?
Who,—while late Western sages they applaud,—
The earlier toiler of his guerdon will defraud ?

CIV.

Yet, often, where he thought he knew—'twas guess :
And what he would have known, ev'n at the cost
Of life itself, his eagle-sightedness
Of soul failed to perceive : then, 'twas the boast
Of some mere modern dwarf to show where lost
His search—the ancient giant,—though the vaunt
Belonged not him who made it,—for, a host
Of names have won from men extravagant
Applause, while of their worth Truth was uncognisant.

CV.

Not *their* more skilful thought plombed the great deep
Of Nature's mystery, which others failed
To fathom : 'twas Herself away did sweep
Th' incumbent waves of darkness, and unsealed
Truth's gems,—for then the channels were revealed
Where they had lain for ages. Accident,—
Contingency,—some called it,—when to yield
Her fruit mature Nature prepared : content
With any name to hide their gross-souled wonderment !

CVI.

Some said the wondrous optic tube had been
For ever undiscovered,—vast expanse
Of space with all her suns and systems, seen
By its weird aid,—and all their utterance
Of dateless Nature's old continuance
And might and grandeur,—been for ever hid,—
If the mechanic had not marked, by chance,
His children's wonder, while, at play, they siid
Together and peeped through the chrystals pellucid.(⁶)

CVII.

Others the thread-bare story oft rehearsed—
When as the godlike sage of Albion's isle
Beheld the apple fall,—at once dispersed
Were Nature's mists, and, without further toil
Of mind, he rose, and with complacent smile,
Serious but glad, proclaimed the force sublime
That binds Earth's surface to her centre while
She wheels around the sun,—pervades his clime,—
And kept all planets in their bounds ere birth of Time.

CVIII.

"Twas accident, they said,—that from the bough
The apple fell, the sage in musing vein
Beheld it, and, like other truths that flow
By chance into men's minds, within the brain
Of Newton this upsprung,—else, it had lain,
Belike, still unperceived, still unproclaimed.—
Thus some the noblest toils of thought were fain
To reckon for nought,—enthroning Chance ; while maimed
Inferior wits with awe by other tongues were named.

CIX.

Few were thy words, Lycurgus, but profound
In truth : from earliest eld all was designed
Or ordered that hath been : Nature's great round
Must needs be travelled : Circumstance and Mind,
Alike, must be brought forth, and be combined,
Ere mightiest Truths evolved : Necessity
O'er all prevailed : the flame, the flood, the wind,
Were masters till the march of Thought set free
The world of struggling men from that old tyranny :

CX.

The march of Thought was onward from of old,—
Onward, for aye, to Nature's eye,—though dense
Film-sighted men no progress could behold :
Thought sprung from thought by chain of consequence,—
In old or newer clime,—till violence,
Fraud, ignorance, want, woe, and pain, and thrall
Evanished at the new omnipotence
Of Mind Nature brought forth : Mind that thro' all
The universe now reigns by might immutable.—

CXI.

Lucretius ceased ; and sounds applausive rose
From myriads, though in gentlest mode exprest.—
And, next, high reas'nings on effect and cause,
And strong necessity, suavely address
The soul of Atticus unto the blest
Assemblage of untroubled minds—who heard
Discourse on mysteries deep without unrest
In their new state, since mysteries ensnared
To doubt no more : doubt, fear, with pain had disappeared.—

CXII.

Thereafter rose the Gracchus, and with mild
Yet firm aspect, what seemed forgot, thus urged :—
Brothers, with metaphysic thought beguiled,
And descant on discovery that enlarged
Man's rule o'er outward things,—not undischarged
Leave we commemoration due of their
Desert whose tireless energies converged
To throne the thought of Brotherhood where'er
They went :—but for their zeal our lot were still despair :—

CXIII.

But for their holy strife,—smit with the type,
Great Spartan, thou in mortal life didst frame,—
Earth had been yet for franchisement unripe,—
And thence unblest. Brothers to mar no claim
Of Wisdom's children to their during fame
I seek : honour, all honour to each shade
Of Enterprize,—to every hallowed name
Of Genius,—and to all who first displayed
To man the power o'er ill that for his seizure stayed !—

CXIV.

But who can fail remember that this power
Was long usurped by Selfishness?—that Wonder
Herself was mazed through every passing hour
At man's achievements,—as he bound the thunder,
Smoothed the storm-wave, clave the live rock asunder,
Or rendered distance but a name;—yet Love
Wept to behold Earth's sable children under
The chain, while their fair-visaged brother drove
Them onward with the lash! Let Time the stain disprove!

CXV.

The foul aspersive stain on Freedom cast
By those whose boast of freedom was most loud!
Bethink ye also that if men now fast
And pine no more, it is because the Proud
Have ceased to be: Earth ever was endowed
With tenfold more of plenty than her sum
Of life required for food: the hills were browed
With luscious vines that smiled as round they clomb
The olives, or festooned them with their purple bloom;

CXVI.

The vallies spread their waving treasures forth;
But, when the vintage came and harvest-tide,
Although the toiler gave his heart to mirth—
To Nature's impulse true—the wealth for Pride
Was garnered up, and Toil was pittanceed. Wide
O'er ocean islets fair were scattered, filled
With overwealth of fruits, but desert-void
Of human life: the dainty 'g there spilled
Her seeds,—the golden orange her perfume distilled

CXVII.

Upon the vacant air,—the grateful palm
And wholesome guava and banana stored
In vain the sea-girt garden,—sweetest balm
Of gums or delicatest juice of mangoes poured
Their riches on the tasteless earth,—down showered
Their flavoured kernels shelly fruits in vain,—
Unless for brutes. Men,—starving men,—looked tow'rd
The sea, and sighed for ships to pass the main
And end their famine,—but they could no help obtain !

CXVIII.

Avarice still held them where their numbers served
To render them dog-cheap as things of hire
For labour : Avarice, that never swerved
From sordid grasping, though it might acquire
Unreckoned wealth. Vapour, electric fire,
All mineral virtues, air, and flame, and flood,
Science subdued,—but Pride did still conspire
With Avarice the toilers to exclude
From all that Science willed to spread for general good.

CXIX.

O Mithridates, thou didst this forget,
Or leave untold. Doth not thy soul perceive
It was when signs of Brotherhood were met
With open heart by Pride, and Power to leave
Its lawlessness the toiler to retrieve
From suffering, yielded,—that the glorious dawn
Of Bliss appeared, and moral light did cleave
Earth's age-woofed darkness ! But I joy 'tis gone—
The reign of Wrong ; and toiling men no more shall groan.—

CXX.

'Th' Agrarian ceased, at once : such gentle dread
'The blest assemblage swayed to raise a thought
Averse in brethren. With mild zeal to tread
'The same thought-track Curtius arose : Thence, caught
The theme Charondas, and, then, Codrus brought
His aid ; and, then, Themistocles : but suave
Their accents were, with tempered reason fraught,—
Although they told how patriot deeds raised brave
Resolve in toiling men—till Slavery found its grave.—

CXXI.

Next, rose Athenæ's soul-compelling tongue,
And joined his sentence for the patriot's praise,—
Yet told, therewith, that poets had not sung
In vain,—nor sculptor vainly fixed the gaze
Of nations,—architect with deep amaze
Entranced them vainly,—nor had Music's joy
Earth visited and failed the mind to raise
And heart to bless,—but Nature did employ
Innumerable powers the thrall of Evil to destroy.—

CXXII.

And, next Demosthenes, Condorcet's soul
Uttered its fervour:—'twas when Man disdained,—
He said,—to kneel beneath the priest's control,
An altar-serf, that human freedom gained
Its first true vantage-ground, and Evil waned
In all its monstrous forms and torturous might ;
And only when free-thought all men maintained
To be their indefeasible birth-right,—
It was,—that Error multiiform was put to flight.—

CXXIII.

Then Romilly renewed his eulogy
Of Gentleness; and spirits thrilled to hear
His laud of Mercy, till with jubilee
Of love they rose,—monarch, and bard, and seer,
Fanatic wild, and misanthrope austere,
That were on earth,—now all in equal state
Of happy brotherhood,—and, thus, with clear
Euphonic chaunt, I heard them celebrate,
In concord blest, Earth's, Hades' gladness consummate :—

CXXIV.

‘ All hail the glorious power of Gentleness,
‘ Of Pity’ and Mercy, Goodness, Love, and Truth !
‘ Knowledge all hail, and Reason fetterless,—
‘ Philanthropy, that yearned with god-like ruth
‘ O’er suffering,—Patriotism, whose eloquent mouth,
‘ Bold heart, and sinewed hand dissolved the thrall
‘ Of Tyrants !—Genius, Song, and Wisdom sooth,
‘ All hail !—Great sources of old Evil’s fall—
‘ Men, spirits, hymn your power, in jocund festival !

CXXV.

‘ Earth’s children raise their universal song
‘ Of love and joy : mountain, and strand, and sea
‘ Are vocal with your praise ! Spirits prolong
‘ The strain : through endless life they anthem ye—
‘ Their endless afterlife of jubilee :
‘ And hymning ye our essences enhance
‘ Still more the measure of their ecstacy,—
‘ Assured more deeply of their heritage,
‘ The more their joyous thought hath joyous utterance !

CXXVI.

‘ Spirits, still more rejoice !—for pain and woe
‘ Are gone, and universal life doth bloom
‘ With joy !’—

 The dream o’erwrought me to a throe
Of bliss,—and I awoke to find my home
A dungeon,—thence, to ponder whence would come
The day that Goodness shall the earth renew,
And Truth’s young light disperse old Error’s gloom,—
When Love shall Hate, and Meekness Pride subdue,—
And when the Many cease their slavery to the Few !

NOTES TO BOOK THE TENTH.

(1) Stanza 5.—Anaxarchus, the follower of Democritus, who, when the tyrant of Cyprus threatened to cut out his tongue, bit it off and spit it at the despot.—See Diogenes Laertius, or Stanley's or Enfield's Hist. of Philosophy. Galgacus and Wallace are, of course, alluded to in the following lines of the stanza.

(2) Stanza 34.—For a description of Petra,—the city in the rock,—the capital of Idumea, or the kingdom of Edom,—see the travels of Stephens the American.—The description of this mysterious relic of the Past, can never be forgotten when once read.

(3) Stanza 38.—The suicide of Demetrius Phalereus (driven from Athens by Demetrius *Poliorectes*, or the City-sieger) is related by Laertius and others.

(4) Stanza 41.—Marshal Berthier's suicide occurred under the following circumstances:—One of the German sovereigns, at whose court he was, if I recollect aright, was blaming the defection of Ney and others from the cause of the Bourbons, at Napoleon's return from Elba, and took occasion to compliment Berthier on his firmness in resisting a temptation natural to one who had been the bosom friend of Buonaparte. Berthier took the compliment so self-reproachfully to heart, that he withdrew to his chamber, threw himself from a window, and was taken up dead.

(5) Stanza 44.—“The unhappy monarch now perceived how low he was sunk, and the haughty spirit, which seemed to have been so long extinct, returning, he scorned to survive this last humiliation, and to protract an ignominious life, not only as the prisoner and tool of his enemies, but as the object of contempt or detestation among his subjects. In a transport of rage he tore the bandages from his wounds and refused, with

such obstinacy, to take any nourishment, that he soon ended his wretched days, rejecting, with disdain, all the solicitations of the Spaniards to embrace the Christian faith." Robertson's Hist. of America—book 5.

(6) Stanza 106.—The story of Janssen, the Dutch spectacle-maker, and his construction of a telescope from a thought originated by the exclamations of his children, who were playing with two lenses, and beheld how they magnified objects, was familiar to my boyhood ; and although modern historians of science reject the account as a fable, it seemed to me not an improper incident to employ in a work of imagination.

THE END.

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